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GEORGE SAND

*After the Crayon Portrait by Couture, in the Musée
Carnavalet, Paris.*



NOVELS

BY

GEORGE SAND

VOLUME XX

SHE AND HE
—❧—
LAVINIA

PRINTED BY ARRANGEMENT WITH

GEORGE BARRIE'S SONS

THE JEFFERSON PRESS

BOSTON

NEW YORK

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MEMOIR



GEORGE SAND

MEMOIR

There is a natural desire to know something of the parentage and birth of renowned authors, and to learn something that may throw light on the formative influences which have operated in producing the works that have rendered them famous. In the case of George Sand, whose nature offers contrasts as striking as were the social conditions of her parents, this desire is particularly strong; therefore, although the limits prescribed to this sketch prevent either an exhaustive review of her life being undertaken, or a psychological study being entered upon, such details may be given as will prove useful and not without interest to readers of this famous writer.

Amandine Lucille Aurore Dupin, who adopted the literary name of *George Sand*, was born in Paris on July 5, 1804. Her father, Maurice Dupin de Francueil, was of aristocratic birth, being the son of Monsieur Dupin de Francueil and Marie Aurore de Saxe, daughter of Marshal Saxe, a natural son of Augustus II, Elector of Saxony, who was allied to the Bourbons by the marriage of his sister to the Dauphin, the father of Louis XVI. Marie Aurore de Saxe, previous to her marriage with Monsieur Dupin de Francueil, had been the wife of Comte de Horn, a natural son of Louis XV. The author's mother, Antoinette Victoire Sophie Delaborde, was the daughter of a bird-fancier in Paris.

These facts concerning her parentage show the association of the aristocratic with the plebeian in the blood of the author.

Her grandfather was a provincial gentleman of moderate fortune, who died within a few years of his marriage to Comtesse de Horn, who had imbibed all the aristocratic prejudices of her family. Her father, Maurice Dupin (his father had abandoned the suffix *De Francueil*), was the object of Madame Dupin's tenderest affection and warmest hopes; but, although of a most amiable disposition, he was somewhat reckless and, as his marriage proved, independent in his views. The disturbed condition of France under the Directory left him little choice as to a profession, so he entered the army. He became a lieutenant as the reward of his services at the battle of Marengo in 1800. It was during his sojourn in Italy that he made the acquaintance of Antoinette Delaborde, whose devoted care and nursing during a severe illness resulted in his becoming deeply attached to her. The lieutenant was only twenty-six years old, and his mistress was four years his senior. The *liaison* was suspected by Madame Dupin, and evoked great opposition on her part; but, in spite of her wounded sentiments, and notwithstanding the fact that Mademoiselle Delaborde was already the mother of two children, the lovers were married in June, 1804. On July 5, 1804, as has been stated, Amandine Lucille Aurore Dupin was born.

Time lightened the weight of the blow to Madame Dupin, who at last consented to recognize her son's wife; but the two women rarely met for some years. The elder Madame Dupin resided at Nohant (a spot which George Sand's writings have made famous), a secluded estate in the centre of France, near La Châtre, in the Department of the Indre. Maurice, who had now become a captain,

made his home in Paris, and, when not on duty, spent his time there with his wife and their little daughter in quiet happiness. The good judgment of the younger Madame Dupin, and her kindly disposition and sincere and faithful affection for her husband and child, seem to have found a counterpart in Captain Dupin, and thus, within their own household, they enjoyed all that was essential to their mutual inclinations.

The infant life of George Sand was passed in the unpretentious home in Rue Grange-Batelière, her mother's good sense materially aiding the development of the child's intelligence. This peaceful life, however, was not long to be undisturbed; for the prolonged absence of Captain Dupin, who was serving in Madrid as aide-de-camp to Murat, induced Madame Dupin to journey thither with her child to join him. After a stay of several weeks, the captain escorted his wife and little daughter to France, where they went to the home of the elder Madame Dupin. They had not long enjoyed the restful recreation of this quiet spot, when Captain Dupin was killed by being thrown from his horse one night on returning from La Châtre.

Aurore was only four years old at the time of this tragic event, which was to be of such momentous consequence to her. Although the feelings of the elder Madame Dupin lost some of their bitterness after the death of her son, there was still too wide a gap between the grandmother, with her class prejudices, and the simple-natured, plebeian daughter-in-law to admit of concord between them, or of a mutual understanding as to the education of the young girl, upon whom, after Captain Dupin's death, the grandmother seemed to centre all her affection. The child became the source of constant conflict, and, although she was permitted all freedom in physical exercise and

enjoyment, and even in the matter of education, she suffered bitter sorrow because of the disputes and quarrels of which she was the unwitting cause. Notwithstanding the heart-sorrow the little one endured, she was already cultivating her vivid imagination and developing her contemplative disposition, which were, even thus early, marked characteristics. We learn that on the occasion of her father's death, when she was but four years old, she fell into a long reverie, during which she seemed to realize the meaning of death as she mused in silent and seemingly apathetic abstraction. These dreamy periods were so frequent that she soon acquired a *stupid* look, speaking of which she says: "It has been always applied to me, and, consequently, it must be true."

Her *Histoire de ma Vie* throws some very interesting light on these earlier years. Aurore was able to read well at four years of age. She studied grammar under old Deschartres, a very pedantic personage, who had formerly acted as secretary to her grandfather, and later as tutor to her father, and who formed part of the household at Nohant. Her grandmother instructed her in music, and sought to impress her with the aristocratic principles which should govern her conduct. Her religious training was formed—if it can be said that she possessed any very clear idea on this subject—on the principles of Voltaire and Rousseau, expounded by the elder Madame Dupin, offset by the simple but devout Christian teaching of Aurore's mother, whose sincere faith better suited the mind of her daughter than did the cold and analytical reasoning of her grandmother.

From the irksome routine of lessons, however, the child turned to the freedom and wild enjoyment of outdoor life. She had as companions in her games a boy and girl who were inmates of the home, the former her half-brother,

and the latter Ursule, who in later years was her faithful servant. With these and the peasant children of the neighborhood, she was able to pass numberless hours face to face with Nature, in whose manifold forms she took unbounded delight. Gathered about the fires they kindled in the meadows, they would romp and dance, or vary the pleasure by story-telling. When the hemp-dressers assembled at the farm of an evening, Aurore took the lead in the stories that were told; but she tells us that she could never succeed in evoking one of the visions with which the peasants were familiar. The *great beast* had appeared to them all, at least once; but she experienced only the excitement of disturbed nerves.

When eight years old, the child had acquired a fair knowledge of her native language, and composition and the cultivation of style were now being taught her, added to which were such subjects as Greek, prosody, and botany; the natural result of which was a brain taxed with details, but lacking in a clear perception of the ideas and principles sought to be established. Yet the imaginative mind was alert; it was storing up a fund of fancy that the future could draw upon almost limitlessly. The conflict between her mother and her grandmother was also exerting a formative influence on the child's mind in coöperation with her tenderness of heart. She could ill bear the grandmother's calm but dignified reproaches, though she entertained for her no little affection.

Constantly reminded of her aristocratic claims, and conscious of the hardly veiled contempt in which her mother was held by the elder Madame Dupin, she grew to despise the pretensions of caste, and her leanings became thoroughly democratic, as if the spontaneous germination of her sorrows. Her mother's angry outbreaks caused her not a tithe of the sorrow that she

endured at the cold reproofs of her grandmother; hence, it was apparent to the latter that Aurore's love for her mother was greater than that for herself. She was, however, bent on securing the full love of her granddaughter and on obtaining sole guardianship. To her she looked as her heir, on whom it was incumbent to espouse the prejudices of the aristocracy.

The frequent disputes that arose resulted at length in a separation. The mother was, after much persuasion, brought to the belief that her daughter's future would be best assured by her child's remaining at Nohant in the care of her grandmother; while she retired to Paris, supported by the slender income from her late husband's estate. It was arranged that Aurore should accompany her grandmother to Paris, where she had a house for the winter, when the child could spend whole days in the company of her beloved mother, while, during the summer, the latter would come to Nohant. The grandmother, finding that the child's affection for her mother showed no diminution, but rather the reverse, and that her own share in her granddaughter's affection was rather that inspired by respect and veneration, became more jealous than ever, and sought to make the separation a real one. Hence, after a few years, the visits to Paris ceased.

During all this time, Aurore had been reading promiscuously, but there had been no definite method in her education, and her religious tendencies were left almost free to her own impulses. She had conversed with Nature; she despised conventionality; she had given free rein to her fancy; she had defined little. Her heart was not satisfied, and her mind was reaching out to an ideal.

Aurore still continued, for a long time, to hope that her mother and grandmother would be brought together again and her happiness consummated; but this hope was cruelly

shattered. One day, she was startled by some disclosures her grandmother made respecting the past life of Aurore's mother, and which, in the narrator's opinion, rendered it of the first importance that the mother and the daughter should live apart. The moment was badly chosen, in a fit of anger and jealousy, and the loving girl resented her guardian's imprudence most bitterly, while suffering intensely. Her affection for her grandmother was thereby lessened, while her despised mother became dearer to her. She resolved to abandon all those material advantages that were promised by remaining with her grandmother, to neglect instruction, and to renounce accomplishments. She rebelled against the lessons of Deschartres, and, indeed, became a thorough mutineer. This was the situation when Aurore approached her fourteenth year; her grandmother, in view of the circumstances, decided to send her to a convent to complete an education befitting her social position. The Couvent des Anglaises was selected, as being the best institution for girls of aristocratic families.

The young girl entered the convent, weary at heart, wounded in her dearest affections: she found it a place of rest. She tells, in the story of her life, of the sisters and pupils, the routine of instruction, the petty quarrels, the pastimes, and the discipline; of the quest of imaginary captives whose release was undertaken; of the wanderings in vaults and passages. Though Aurore was of a dreamy nature, yet her disposition manifested extremes; for at times she abandoned herself to boisterous enjoyment. So in the convent she became resigned to her lot, yet, yielding to her spirit of independence, she joined in the pranks of the mischievous scholars. Of the two classes into which the girls were divided,—*sages* and *diabls*,—Aurore made choice of the latter. This life

continued for nearly two years, the girl rarely leaving the convent even for a single day, being deprived of her summer vacations by her grandmother, who wished to bring her to a realization of the pleasure and freedom of the Nohant home, which she would be the better capable of by reason of her prolonged absence.

The routine of somewhat indifferent and desultory study and the enjoyment of the *diablos*' pranks were soon to give way to a new impulse. Hitherto, Aurore had felt no attachment to the religious exercises of the convent but one day she was seated in an obscure corner of the convent chapel, when a spiritual enthusiasm awoke in her mind. She writes of this circumstance: "In an instant it broke forth, like some passion quickened in a soul that knows not its own force. . . . All her needs were of the heart, and that was exhausted." The fervent religious emotion which she experienced at once transformed her. With her whole-natured devotion, she yields to the impulse; faith finds her soul unresisting and she bends to the divine grace that appeals to her. Yet the transformation swayed her soul with its consequences; she shed the scalding tears of the pious, she experienced the exhaustion of feverish exaltation and protracted meditation, but she found a personal faith and, through all the emotions and changes of the turbulent years that followed, the pure faith that she imbibed in the silent convent cloisters was never wholly obscured. This change wrought wonders in the young girl's conduct: she was no longer a hoyden, but kept herself strictly within the rules of the convent, and devoted herself with regularity to its prescribed studies, yet with no more real interest than before.

In the early part of 1820, Madame Dupin the elder fell seriously ill, and, believing that her life would soon close,

she desired her granddaughter's return to Nohant. The lapse of time and the more serious disposition of the latter were calculated to help Aurore in the cares of the household that now devolved upon her, and in the nursing of her grandmother, to whom she devoted herself assiduously during the ten months that remained of her life. Her religious enthusiasm underwent some abatement after her return, and the temporary absences from Madame Dupin's bedside were spent in melancholy reverie, interrupted by active exercise. At the convent, she had been counselled by her spiritual adviser not to entertain the idea of a nun's life, for which she had expressed a desire, but to yield to temporal and physical diversions. At home, she adopted a middle course, neglecting neither her religious nor her temporal duties, while still bent on taking the veil at a later period. It was at this time that she was taught horseback riding by her half-brother Hippolyte, who had become a cavalryman. This exercise became her favorite pastime, and by it she was able to break the monotony of her life and enjoy the beauties of the surrounding country, which, in its peaceful charm and its succession of gentle scenes, was in harmony with her contemplative mind, and evoked the spirit of poetry within her.

The consciousness of the insufficiency of the education she had hitherto received now became apparent to Aurore, and she determined to effect her own instruction. She therefore read eagerly, her convent teaching and experience inclining her first to study works of Christian doctrine and practice, though she pursued her reading with great indefiniteness of plan. The perusal and comparison of the *Imitation of Christ* with that of Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* involved her in serious doubts and apprehensions; her faith in Catholicism was at least sincere, but the reasonings and discrepancies she found in

these works were such as to appeal to her intelligence while puzzling her faith in the doctrines. In the orderly obedience to the teachings of the Romish church rendered in the quiet convent, there was nothing to weaken the faith in the system; but face to face with the practice of its tenets, and in view of its inconsequence, apparently, in the lives of the country people by whom she was surrounded, formidable difficulties arose in her conscience. The same wholeness of character and independence of judgment that had hitherto marked her conduct forbade her to give adhesion to principles which were at variance with her reason and conscience. To her, the practice of the confession and the doctrine that salvation could be obtained only by those within the pale of the orthodox Catholic communion were absolutely unacceptable. In her eager search for the truth, she studied the works of the philosophers—Aristotle, Montaigne, Bacon, Pascal, Bossuet, Locke, Leibnitz, Montesquieu, Mably, Condillac. Of these, she preferred Leibnitz, and, speaking of her study of this author, she says: "In reading Leibnitz, I unconsciously became a Protestant." She could not conceive of that being right which denied the liberty of conscience. So far, the result, however, was, as might have been expected, much knowledge of opinions, yet no very definite conviction, or clear establishment of principles; but the desire to arrive at a true ideal faith was intensified.

After the philosophers, came the moralists and poets: La Bruyère, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Pope. These writers were read by the young girl with insatiable delight; but, as in the case of the philosophers, without system. Thought piled on thought, principle jostled against principle; all rapidly mastered and sympathetically appreciated. The master was yet to be found, but he was at hand. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's

charm of eloquence and powerful logic gave her a halting-point for her reason, and pointed the way to her. Her already relaxed hold on Catholicism was now released.

The mental strain and emotional conflict of such studies resulted, naturally enough, in a complete nervous exhaustion, and her will was incompetent to enable her to formulate the truth, to comprehend the doctrines, or even to fix her choice. Her intellect did not fail her, or her memory betray her; but, in the confusion of her ideas, she lapsed into a deep melancholy, which resulted in a disgust of life. She mused on death, and, she says, often contemplated it, rarely seeing the river without mentally expressing: "How easy it would be! Only one step to take!" To the oft-recurring question *yes, or no?* as to the plunge into the limpid stream whose waters would forever still the tumult of her mind, she one day answered *yes*; but, happily, the mare she rode into the deep water to carry out her purpose, by a magnificent bound frustrated its rider's intent and saved the life of the woman who was to thrill so many readers with her passionate prose-poems.

During this period, Aurore Dupin manifested, in her intrepidity in horsemanship and in her independence of conventionality in respect of her exercises and costume, the same spirit that so often brought her under the ban of heedless criticism. It was her custom to don boys' clothes on her expeditions, that she might with perfect freedom enjoy the riding and shooting which were now her favorite pastimes. But this course brought upon her the condemnation of her strict neighbors at La Châtre, who regarded such departures from the prevailing customs as evidences of eccentricity and ill-manners.

The death of her grandmother, in December, 1821, opened a new phase in Aurore's life. The efforts which

Madame Dupin the elder had made during life to withdraw the girl from the influence of her mother were perpetuated in her will, by which she appointed her nephew, Comte René de Villeneuve, the guardian of her granddaughter, to whom she had left her property. On the reading of the will, the relations between Aurore's paternal and maternal families were completely severed. Madame Dupin was not ignorant of the clause of the will which sought to deprive her of the guardianship of her daughter, and which was not valid in law, and she resisted its application. As the result of discussion, it was agreed that Deschartres, the trusted adviser of the late Madame Dupin, should be appointed as co-guardian with Aurore's mother. Deschartres was left in charge of Nohant, and Madame Dupin took her daughter with her to Paris. Here her life was by no means happy; the mother she idolized seems to have suffered in temper from the troubles and checks she had undergone, and her capricious outbursts of anger were only exasperated by her daughter's gracious and yielding way. In her mother, Aurore failed to find the guide that her nature required, and to a certain extent she was neglected by her. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that the young girl was ready to welcome any change that would relieve the irritation she endured.

The opportunity presented itself in a visit to the country home of some friends whose acquaintance Madame Dupin had recently made. In the lovely home of the Duplessis family, Aurore was cheered by the companionship of young people and the bright society found at the house. Madame Dupin left her daughter with her friends, promising that she would come for her "next week," but she was persuaded to permit the stay to continue for five months. Here Aurore met the man whom she deliberately chose for her husband. He was a friend of her hosts, Lieutenant

Casimir Dudevant, twenty-seven years old, and the natural son of Colonel Dudevant, a Gascon landowner, who had been created a Baron of the Empire for his services under Napoleon. The marriage of the colonel having proved childless, he had acknowledged Casimir, and provided for his succession to his property.

On seeing Mademoiselle Dupin, the lieutenant at once took a liking to her, and this feeling was soon reciprocated by the young girl. The officer does not appear to have been a very romantic suitor, but at least he seems to have been sincere; and the fortunes of the parties being equal, a reasonable prospect of happiness presented itself in a marriage between them. The lieutenant ere long proposed marriage to Aurore, adding: "It is not customary, I know, to propose marriage to the intended affianced; but, mademoiselle, I love you. I am unable to resist telling you of my sentiments, and if you find my appearance not too displeasing—in a word, if you are willing to accept me as your husband, I will make my intentions known to Madame Dupin; if, however, you reject me, I should deem it useless to trouble your mother."

This frank but blunt proposal rather pleased Aurore; it was entirely unconventional. Madame Dupin added her persuasion, as she considered the offer a suitable one, and, the consent of Colonel Dudevant having been obtained, the marriage was solemnized in September, 1822. An incident involved in the preliminaries to the marriage is worthy of notice, as evidence of the generous feelings and tender regard of Aurore for her old and pedantic tutor, Deschartres. Being called upon to render the accounts of his management of his ward's estate, he could not explain a deficit of eighteen thousand francs, for the expenditure of which he could not produce receipts.

He was dumfounded; Madame Dupin threatened to cause his arrest; but her daughter, moved to pity at the old man's distress, insisted on taking the blame on herself, explaining that the sum represented money paid to her by Deschartres, for which she had neglected to give him receipts. This generous course saved the old man from disgrace, and perhaps ruin, for he was proposing to sell his own pitiful estate to make good the deficit due to his mismanagement.

Soon after the marriage, Monsieur and Madame Dudevant took up their residence on the bride's estate at Nohant. The life there for some time was tranquil, if not entirely happy. The young wife seems to have abandoned the life of the intellect, and soon her whole dream was of maternity. Matrimony had already failed as the ideal life she may have contemplated. The companionship of her husband was not that living force she had pictured. Probably she had trusted too much to reason and common sense, and certainly she had married in ignorance of her husband's character and tastes, and, it may be, in ignorance of her own. At any rate, she was not yet unhappy.

In July, 1823, Maurice was born, her beloved son, he who was to be the comfort and joy of her life in all its troubles, and in whom the mother was to find a compensation for the sorrows of the wife. From the time his son was born, Monsieur Dudevant seems to have neglected his wife; he was of a rather interfering disposition, and, moreover, given to the pleasures of hunting, in pursuit of which he frequently left his wife as early as two or three o'clock in the morning. The young wife, whose health was not robust, and whose disposition led her to desire the society of her husband, at first mildly reproached him for his absence, but the effect was only

momentary; happily, the joys of motherhood consoled her, at least for a time, and matters progressed placidly.

The seclusion of the life at Nohant was first interrupted in 1824, when a visit was made to Paris and to the home of the Duplessises. Later, in 1825, a journey was taken to some of the watering-places in the Pyrenees, where it was hoped Madame Dudevant's health would be reëstablished, and by means of which the young wife also hoped to bring about a change in her husband's habits. To this trip, which was to be made more entertaining by the company of two friends of her convent life, Madame Dudevant looked with eager interest; for, in a letter to Madame Dupin, written in June, 1825, she says: "I shall be most happy at once more seeing the Pyrenees, which I scarcely remember, but which everybody describes as offering incomparably lovely scenery."

The stay of a few months among the mountains proved of great physical benefit to Madame Dudevant. In her letters to her mother, she describes with almost childish glee the excursions she made, the daring feats she undertook, and the beauty of the scenery. But the hope of changed manners on the part of her husband was not realized; his treatment on their return continued as before; when not engaged in his favorite pastime of hunting, he indulged in the pleasures of the table.

The duties of a mother and a housewife now seemed to absorb Madame Dudevant's thoughts; yet, while outwardly calm and dignified, the experience she was gaining of conjugal life, which had destroyed all her illusions, was establishing her views on the relations of husband and wife and formulating her ideal of satisfied love. It cannot be doubted that her earlier works, especially *Indiana*, are the pathetic and passionate voice of her soul, long silenced by her obligations as wife and mother; for in a

letter to Madame Dupin, written in May, 1831, Madame Dudevant writes: "I cannot bear even the shadow of coercion; that is my principal defect. All that is imposed on me as a duty grows detestable to me; what I can do without any interference, I do whole-heartedly."

For a long time, the bitterness of her disappointment found no confidant; and Monsieur Dudevant's interfering methods, and his indifference to his wife's society, must have hourly wounded her sensitive nature. In the letter last quoted, we read: "I hold liberty of thought and freedom of action as the chief blessings in this world. If to these are joined the cares of a family, then how immeasurably sweeter life is; but where is one to find such a felicitous combination?" But during the years in which her sorrows were accumulating, her letters to those outside bear no sign of bitterness or anger. She endured her grief and disappointment silently, so far as her friends were concerned. The breach between the husband and the wife was, however, opening wider day by day. In 1826, a letter to Madame Dupin tells of the life at Nohant during the Carnival, and of the rustic wedding of two of her domestics, in a cheerful and merry strain. Matters proceeded in this superficial tranquillity, with no remarkable change, until the fall of 1828, when the birth of her daughter, Solange, afforded a new interest and added duties.

We glean from her letters that Madame Dudevant's health had given her serious cause for anxiety; but plenty of outdoor life, and the duties of the home, combined with her constitutional soundness, enabled her to overcome this drawback; she writes to her mother, about this period, in the same strain as before, describing her occupations and condition, and, speaking of her husband, says: "Dear papa is very busy with his harvest. . . . Dressed in a blouse, he is up at dawn, rake in hand. . . . As

for us women, all day long we sit on corn-sheaves, that fill the yard. We read and work much, hardly ever thinking of going out. We enjoy a plenty of music." According to her own account, Madame Dudevant had become a settled countrywoman.

In 1829, Monsieur and Madame Dudevant passed two months in Bordeaux and at the home of her husband's mother; and on her return to Nohant in July she resumed her quiet home life, restricting the circle of her friends in conformity with her retired tastes. Here they enjoyed the society of her half-brother and his wife. But the period of outward calm and resignation to her condition was fast nearing its term. The relations between the husband and the wife were rapidly growing worse. Among the wife's occupations and diversions of this period were painting and composition. Of the former, Madame Dudevant speaks with enthusiasm later; already, in 1827, she had tried her hand at portrait painting, for in a letter to her mother she writes: "I send you a profile drawing done from imagination; it is a regular daub. It is well that I should tell you that it is intended as a representation of Caroline. I am the only one who sees a likeness in it. . . . I also drew my own portrait. . . . Yet I did not succeed better than with Caroline's. . . . I laugh in its face on recognizing how pitiable it makes me look, so I dare not send it." And again, early in February, 1830, she sends a portrait of her son to her mother. It is well, as we shall soon see, that Madame Dudevant was so little encouraged by her efforts. Yet of her literary proclivities, which she also indulged by attempts at novel-writing, she was certainly not convinced, and of her ability in this direction still less so.

The education of her son Maurice had now become a matter of extreme importance to Madame Dudevant. The

Madame Dudevant at once informed her husband of her decision to leave him, and of the motives thereof. The explanations that followed led to an arrangement whereby Madame Dudevant was to receive from her husband an income of about three thousand francs, and to spend one-half of the year at Nohant and the other half in Paris. The care she took to keep the secret of her troubles from the world, for the sake of her children, may be understood from her letters. She desired that it should be supposed that she was leading a "separate life," hoping that, by her alternate residence in Paris and at Nohant, her husband would "learn circumspection." She writes to Monsieur Boucoiran, on December 8, 1830: "I must confess I am distressed at the thought that the secret of my domestic affairs may become known to others besides you. . . . The good understanding which, notwithstanding my separation from my husband, I desire to maintain in all that concerns my son, will compel me to act with as much caution when absent as when with him." The momentous step which was to result in Madame Dudevant's entire liberty of action, and, above all, in her giving to the world the masterpieces which soon rendered her famous, was taken in the early days of January, 1831, when, leaving her children, and her home at Nohant, with its cherished associations, she set out for Paris, armed with letters of introduction to one or two literary men, given her by friends at La Châtre.

But there was yet a wide chasm to be gulfed. Her equipment for the life of independence she contemplated was, in a material sense, very limited. Her income was insufficient to secure her the luxuries she had enjoyed at Nohant, and to which her tastes inclined. Her stout heart and indomitable will were, however, not to be shaken. She had cast the die. She would not face the humiliation

of failure and a retreat from the position she had created. But live she must, and in her endeavors to secure a livelihood she sought to employ the accomplishments she had acquired. At first, she attempted translating, believing that her knowledge of English, obtained at the convent, would provide her the necessary income; but in this she was doomed to disappointment. Then, too, millinery and dressmaking proved profitless, in spite of long hours of daily toil. Somewhat better results attended her efforts to gain a sufficient subsistence by art. The pastime at Nohant now stood her in stead to some degree. She made a limited success in miniature paintings for fancy articles, such as cigar-cases, snuff-boxes, and tea-caddies. But she still failed in her purpose. So nearly, however, had she adopted art as a profession, that it appears that, had she not been discouraged by the price secured on one occasion, her energies would have been directed away from the field in which she attained her glory!

It is curious to find Madame Dudevant hesitating in her choice between literature and art. The decision was not long before being reached, happily for the world of literature, though it cannot be claimed that the choice was quite voluntary, if we may judge by her letters. Writing to Monsieur Boucoiran on January 13, 1831, she says: "I am embarking on the stormy sea of literature. For one must live," and, later, to Monsieur Duvernet she says that only the "profits of writing tempt my material and positive mind." That a dominant inclination for letters possessed her, however, is surely indicated in her early attempts at composition; even during the previous autumn, while at Nohant, she had wrought out a kind of romance in her grandmother's boudoir, with her children at her side, of which she says: "Having penned it, I was convinced that it was of no value, but that I might do less badly."

The decisive first step in her literary career was due probably more to the advice of Jules Sandeau than to any other cause; for, spite of the rare qualities she possessed, Madame Dudevant was diffident as to her powers. Jules Sandeau was, like herself, a native of Berry; they had formed each other's acquaintance at Nohant some time before the separation between Monsieur and Madame Dudevant. On receiving her confidences as to her straitened circumstances, Sandeau advised Madame Dudevant to adopt the literary career. It was soon arranged that the two should collaborate in writing an article for the *Figaro*, which was accepted with so much encouragement that others soon followed. Writing of this arrangement to Monsieur Duvernet, Madame Dudevant says: "I have resolved to associate him with my labors, or myself with his, as you may please to put it. Be it as it may, he lends me his name, as I do not wish mine to appear."

But the way to fame, though rapid, was not without discouragement. A novelette had been accepted by the *Revue de Paris*, but its publication was delayed in favor of known authors, and, meantime, the future favorite was scribbling articles for the *Figaro*, at the price of seven francs a column, which, she remarks, "enables me to eat and drink, and even attend the play." The drawbacks and discouragements she suffered were many; she writes to Monsieur Duvernet, in February, 1831: "Had I foreseen half the difficulties I encounter, I should never have entered on the career. But, the more the obstacles I meet with, the greater is my determination to go forward. . . . We must have a passion in life."

But, spite of this "passion," our author began her life-work under circumstances that might well have intimidated a less ardent and determined person. Her imperfect and fragmentary education; her crude and ill-digested

ideas of social life; the bitter memories and smarts of domestic life; the disillusionment she had suffered in her hopes of marriage,—all these were sore obstacles; but she still had unbounded faith, a sympathetic mind and heart; and her poetic nature cast a lustre over all her thoughts. If she had no precise ideal, no well-matured method, if she lacked experience of the under-currents that swayed social and political circles, she was endowed with keen perceptive faculties and a rapid insight into character. She loved Nature passionately, and to the cry of human sorrow her heart was quickly responsive.

During these first struggles in the literary path, Madame Dudevant's letters to her son and his tutor manifest her constant anxiety as to the welfare of those she had left behind, and of her longing for the time when, in accordance with her arrangements with Monsieur Dudevant, she could be with her children again. There is no touch of pride or vainglory in her naïve confessions, nor does she claim for herself any but an amateur's position in the world of letters. She writes to Monsieur Duvernet: "I nevertheless long to go back to Berry; for my children are dearer than all else. But for the hope of some day being more useful to them with the pen of the scribe than with the needle of the housewife, I should not be away from them so long. In spite, however, of the innumerable difficulties I encounter, I am resolved to take the first steps in this thorny career."

Soon after the appearance of the articles in the *Figaro*, the two fellow-provincials produced a novel entitled *Rose et Blanche, ou la Comédienne et la Religieuse* (Rose and Blanche, or the Actress and the Nun), which, through the good offices of Monsieur de Latouche, the director of the *Figaro*, also a native of Berry, to whom Madame Dudevant had been recommended by the Duvernets of La

Châtre, realized four hundred francs. A difficulty arose touching the name of the author, which must be published with the work. Sandeau was in a quandary, for he risked incurring the reprobation of his relatives, who were averse to his entering upon literature to the prejudice of his law studies, should his name appear; while Madame Dudevant dreaded a scandal, if she were named as the author. As a result, a compromise was effected, and the book appeared as the work of *Jules Sand*.

The freedom required by Madame Dudevant in her new profession she soon found was greatly hampered by her sex; it was almost indispensable to visit many places from which women were generally barred; consequently, she adopted male attire, apparently at the suggestion of Madame Dupin, to whom such disguise was not infrequent in the course of her travels with her husband. For this *shocking* procedure she has been unnecessarily condemned; but her own explanation of the causes, and its advantages, seem to justify the singular course. Madame Dudevant was a singular woman; moreover, she found herself shackled in the execution of her new-found aims. The obstacles had to be overcome, and without fuss or parade she brushed the difficulty aside by the most direct means available. Under her disguise, she was free to enter cafés, theatres, lounge about the boulevard, visit picture-galleries, come and go at all hours, attended or otherwise—in a word, mix with all sorts and conditions, to gather the raw material which her rare skill enabled her to spin into such charming and provoking articles as she was at the time writing. But hardly had Madame Dudevant made her début as a journalist, when she found herself within measurable distance of La Force (a prison to which political offenders were consigned), in consequence of an article in the *Figaro*; for on March 9, 1831,

she says in a letter to Monsieur Boucoiran: "You must know that I began with a scandal, a tilt at the National Guards. The issue of the *Figaro* of the day before yesterday was pounced upon by the police. I was making my preparations to spend six months at La Force, for I had decided that I would shoulder the responsibility for my article. Monsieur Vivien, however, foresaw how ridiculous such a prosecution would be, and caused the proceedings to be abandoned. All the worse for me! My reputation and fortune might have been made by a political conviction."

While the choice of literature as a career seems not to have aroused any opposition on the part of her own kin, the case was different as to her husband's. Baroness Dudevant dreaded the possibility of the name she bore appearing in printed books; but such a circumstance was not contemplated, and the baroness's dignity was saved.

The success of *Rose et Blanche*, in spite of its defects, was such as to pave the way for further novels. It was arranged between its joint authors that a new novel, entitled *Indiana*, should be prepared by them. On Madame Dudevant's return to Nohant for three months, she set about her part, and on reaching Paris in July, 1831, she called upon Sandeau, to submit her contribution; her collaborator had not even written a line of his share. Reading her work, he deemed it a masterpiece, and, notwithstanding the objections of Madame Dudevant, insisted on its publication as her sole production. A new difficulty here presented itself, but at the suggestion of Monsieur de Latouche it was solved by the use of their common literary name *Sand*, with the prefix *George*. This incident gave to the world the name which was soon to acquire such fame. Henceforward we shall speak of Madame Dudevant as *George Sand*.

During her early struggles in Paris, the mother and friend is never lost in the enthusiastic and impulsive writer; her letters to her son, to his tutor, and to other friends, present a very intelligible reflex of her mind. She is not to be turned back because she does not meet with success at once. A close observer of all that is going on about her, she is a lively critic, and an equally enthusiastic supporter; she finds enjoyment anywhere "where hatred, suspicion, injustice, and bitterness do not poison the atmosphere." Her children's welfare is the burden of her mind. Her letters are full of tenderness and a complete entering into their joys and pleasures, and are charged with wise and interesting counsel.

With the publication of *Indiana*, George Sand's renown was established. In a letter to Monsieur Duvernet, written July 6, 1832, she says: "The success of *Indiana* makes me feel nervous. I never looked for anything like it; but hoped that I might labor without attracting notice, or deserving attention. But the Fates have willed otherwise. It is my part to justify the unmerited favor shown to me." While the authorship of this book was an enigma to many critics, the public seized on the work with avidity. Its success was beyond all cavil. People recognized in it a master hand tracing a new path in romance-writing. We are forbidden by George Sand to consider the book as a romance history of herself, for she always protested against her works being interpreted as autobiographical; still, we might almost say that *Indiana* came into the world ready-made. Its conception at least was, as it were, the burden of her musings in the quiet hours at Nohant. Her ideal was formed of a loving, tender woman, a woman with a heart that beat only for chaste and profound love, love controlling all, pure in itself, and believing all else to be pure. Unquestionably,

the work was the spontaneous outburst of the long-indulged dreams of the disappointed woman. All the accessories to her central idea were not far to seek, and her marvellous imaginative power and poetic fancy sufficed to clothe her ideas with an artistic mantle that would obscure the individuality. Of course, Colonel Delmare is not Maurice Dudevant. Nor is Ralph found in the life about her: he is the creature of her idea.

With the success of *Indiana*, George Sand found publishers seeking her work, both the *Revue de Paris* and the *Revue des Deux Mondes* engaging her services. The irritation of compulsion to work was now largely removed; even in the early part of February, 1832, she writes to her mother: "I can now take it quietly, without worrying myself. If I sometimes work by night, it is simply because I cannot leave a thing half finished." On her return to Paris in April of the same year, she was accompanied by her little daughter, Solange, who was then between three and four years old, and the mother's letters to her son tell of the doings of his little sister, and show how good is the distraction thus afforded to the mother. The visits to the Luxembourg, the Jardin des Plantes, the circus, all the little talk that could please and comfort her boy, the fond mother pours out in childlike, easy prattle that bespeaks her entire sympathy with her children.

Again at Nohant for the summer, George Sand applied herself strenuously to the composition of *Valentine*; so closely, indeed, that, if she is to be taken seriously as to a letter written in August, 1832, she was rather weary of her work. At any rate, its early issue was marked by so brilliant a success, that the labor and weariness of her task may well have been forgotten. This book, like its predecessor, was severely criticised by those who saw in it an outspoken challenge to recognized social decrees.

With what wealth of poetry, what beauty of imagery, and what force, is told the story of a girl sacrificed by a marriage of expediency! The crime is not the author's; she strikes at the system which destroys a pure heart and substitutes misery and shame for happiness and dignity. The author would trace the fault, to have it remedied.

Though the subject of *Valentine* is, like that of *Indiana*, unhappy marriage, the former, in arrangement, plan, and style, gave further convincing evidence of the author's artistic skill and promise of rich literary treasures of diverse and widely varying style and conception. *Valentine*, the heroine, has been brought up according to the prejudices and decrees of the aristocratic class. She marries in accordance with the dictates of her family. Her heart is not involved; she is passive in the matter. Later, the abandonment she suffers, and the passion of her own soul, lead her into a false position, of which the man who is entitled to call her his wife takes advantage. The climax is dishonor, death.

The winter of 1832 finds George Sand again in Paris, where she is comfortably settled; she finds herself bothered with visitors, but out of the clutches of poverty. In her apartments, she seeks her pleasure in her work and the society of her little Solange, of whom she writes at this time: "She brings me more happiness than all the rest." In a letter to her son's tutor, written December 20, 1832, she says: "I am making lots of money; I am receiving propositions from all quarters. The *Revue de Paris* and the *Revue des Deux Mondes* are fighting for my work. I finally bound myself to the latter." *La Marquise* had just been published, the novel having been received with great favor. Thus, within two years from the time she came to Paris to seek liberty of action and

thought, wounded in her faith and affection, and hopes entirely shattered of realizing any joy in her husband's society, George Sand had overthrown all obstacles in the path before her, and had become a distinguished personality in the world of letters.

In her next work, *Lélia*, written in 1833, the author's riotous imagination produced a poem—for such it was—which was regarded as another manifestation of the wide range of her faculties. The book, however, is regarded as important chiefly from the fact that George Sand confessedly pictures herself more closely than in any other of her works. She writes to Monsieur François Rollinat: "This book will enable you to know the depth of my soul, and also that of your own." Again, she says later, in 1836, in a letter to Mademoiselle Chantepie: "*Lélia* . . . contains more of my inner self than any other book." Again, writing in 1842, she says: "Lélia is not offered as an example to be followed but as a martyr who may arouse thoughts in his judges and executioners, those who pronounce the law, and those who execute it. . . . I have never preached a doctrine; I do not feel that I am intelligent enough to do so."

It was after the publication of *Lélia* that George Sand first became personally acquainted with Alfred de Musset, then a young man of twenty-three, but already of established fame as a dramatist and poet. That this acquaintance should have rapidly matured into a close friendship is not surprising. On her part, George Sand felt that she had encountered a soul that understood her, and while De Musset was equally enchanted with her. Before the year 1833 had closed, the two attached friends had started for Italy, full of the hope of continued mutual happiness. It is unnecessary here to trace the history of their friendship in detail; it is certain that the me-

sufferings and the unsatisfied heart-cravings of George Sand had rendered her morbid. Her letters to friends, written before her journey to Italy, show that she realized too well the hollowness of society to lean upon it for guidance, or even distraction. She says, writing in July: "Of the things I hate or condemn, society is the least." To her, therefore, the companionship of De Musset must have seemed as refreshing as rain to a parched land. In speaking of the separation that followed in April, 1834, when De Musset, still very weak from a sickness, left Venice for Paris, accompanied by a Venetian physician, she writes: "We have parted, perhaps only for a few months; perhaps for ever. Only God knows what will become of my poor head and heart. I feel that I possess strength enough to live, toil, and endure." The story of this painful effort of genius to lead and ennoble genius is told with much interest in *Elle et Lui* (She and He), which appeared more than twenty-five years later.

The Italian journey was of immense influence on the future literary labors of the novelist. While in Venice, she worked hard in order to pay off the debt due to her publishers for the money advanced for the journey. Here she wrote *André*, *Jacques*, *Mattea*, and the first *Lettres d'un Voyageur*. Here she toiled while suffering from disappointment and consumed with longing to be with her children again. Of these works, *Jacques* presents her ideal of a true, loving man; whose passion is deep and exalted, whose soul faints at the prospect of faithlessness; whose self-devotion leads to abandonment of every right, even to self-destruction by suicide in order to shield the beloved woman from the disgrace of an unlawful joy and the consequences of a dishonored happiness. Of the other tales mentioned, it may be said that *André* offers a style

quite distinct from all the author's previous works. The burden of the tale still is love, but love in a weak and docile nature, which yields to its elevating influence, only to be crushed. The early *Lettres d'un Voyageur* have a charm that none of the later ones possess; they tell of the journeys in the Alps and in the vicinity of the Tyrol; of the author's lonely musings in Venice; of the sorrow that weighed on her heart.

In August, George Sand was once more back in Paris, making her arrangements to visit Nohant again, which she reached before the close of the month. In describing her journey through Switzerland, she relates that she had walked three hundred and fifty leagues; yet, with all the change of scene and novelty of surroundings, a deep melancholy settled in her heart. She writes to Monsieur Boucoiran on August 31, 1834, from Nohant: "I felt that I had come to bid adieu to my birthplace, to all the memories of my youth and childhood; for you must have perceived and divined that life is hereafter hateful, even impossible, for me, and that I have seriously made up my mind to end it before long." Again, in the same letter: "I am very desirous of having a long chat with you, and of confiding to you the fulfilment of my last and sacred wishes." But the presence of friends of sympathetic natures and the care of her children served to dissipate the cloud that had settled on her mind; as she says shortly after, she was "cured, . . . because, having become accustomed and resigned to my sorrows, my judgment is no longer led astray by my grief."

Affairs at Nohant for some time after her return from Italy must have added greatly to her unusual mental disturbance; she continued to reside alternately at Paris and Nohant, in accordance with the agreement made in 1830, but the arrangement was becoming irksome. Monsieur

Dudevant's management of the estate that his wife had relinquished to him was anything but satisfactory, and, moreover, with the growth of her children, George Sand became increasingly anxious as to their control and care. The complete rupture between herself and De Musset, which was attended with very painful and stormy incidents, augmented her anxiety and grief during the winter of 1834-1835.

By this time, George Sand's fame had surrounded her with a large circle of friends, which included the most eminent men of the day; among them were the leaders of the various schools that contended for the mastery in matters of social progress. To them the eloquent author appeared as a much-to-be-desired ally; their theories would enjoy greater popularity if they could be presented in the entertaining and passionate language and clothed with the poetic imagery of the highly talented author of *Indiana* and *Valentine*. In the spring of the year 1835, she became acquainted with Monsieur de Lamennais whose freedom of thought and humanitarian Christianity were well suited to George Sand's predilections, and secured the approval of her intelligence, which had rebelled against the bigoted teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Hence, for a time, her genius was directed by the philosophy of this eminent teacher, and she wrote for his journal, *Le Monde*, an unfinished series styled *Lettres à Marcie*. It is not surprising that George Sand's enthusiasm should have been aroused by the liberal doctrines set forth by this liberal-minded advocate of religious and social progress. Her natural generosity, the whole experience of her life, led her to espouse his views with the fervor of a devotee; and it seems certain from her letters that her troubled mind was soothed by the righteous and humane principles which she conceived the new movement

to embody. She says in her letter to Monsieur Adolphe Guérault, dated May 6, 1835: "You are in error if you consider me more *fretful* now than in the past. Just the reverse, I am less so. Great men and great thoughts are constantly before me." The same correspondent appears to have taken George Sand mildly to task for her custom of appearing in men's clothes; and it may not be uninteresting to quote from her reply, as the best indication of her position as to this question. She writes: "It is better that you should not trouble yourself concerning my garments. It is a very small matter what kind of costume I wear in my study, and my friends will, I trust, respect me equally whether I wear a vest or a shift. I never appear out of doors in men's clothes without taking a stick with me; so do not feel alarmed. My fancy for wearing a frock-coat occasionally, and under certain circumstances, will not accomplish a revolution in my life."

About the same time, she made the acquaintance of the advocate Michel, of Bourges, whose advanced views on politics, enunciated so eloquently, had acquired for him great renown. A third person also subjected her generous instincts to his philosophical teachings—Pierre Leroux, whose acquaintance she made at this period. George Sand's emotional nature was easily captivated by the eloquent pleadings and close reasonings of these men. She spoke from her heart; she says of herself: "I easily relapse into a wholly sentimental and poetical existence without doctrines and systems." The influence of these leaders is found stamped on the novels of this period, as well as in the *Lettres d'un Voyageur*.

It is clear that at this time the relations of the husband and the wife were undergoing a strain that threatened an early further change. In May, 1835, Monsieur Dudevant prepared and signed an agreement which was forwarded

to his wife for her signature, but which she returned torn up. Explaining this incident, she writes to Monsieur Duteil, of La Châtre: "I also perceive that grief and bad feeling on his part would attend the division of our home and means. . . . I therefore return to you the agreements that he signed; moreover, I return them torn up, so that he may have only the trouble of burning them, in case he should in the least degree regret the arrangement prepared and set out by himself." This matter dragged on until the fall, and it is not difficult to realize how much the situation in which George Sand was placed grieved and chafed her. Some evidence is found in her own words, written in June, 1835: "Our society is still completely hostile to those who run counter to its institutions and prejudices, and women who realize the need of freedom, but are not yet ripe for it, are wanting both in strength and power to maintain the combat against an entire society which has, to say the least, decreed for them abandonment and misery."

Her chief anxiety in this domestic misfortune was as to her children's welfare and control. She was jealous of their affection for her. Her letters to her son at this period are full of the tender solicitude she feels; she puts before him a high standard for his life's guidance, and strives to inculcate unselfish love as a consoling virtue. She betrays her anxiety lest her children should be separated from her. Finally, in the autumn of 1835, she applied to the courts for a legal decision that should give her the definite and valid settlement which Monsieur Dudevant had previously voluntarily agreed to, but had since avoided. George Sand proposed to pay her husband a yearly income of three thousand eight hundred francs, which, in addition to the small remnant of the income from his own fortune, would make a total revenue of five

thousand francs. She was to undertake the charge of her children's education, and to have possession of Nohant. Even in this crisis, the wife's respect for the father of her children is in clear evidence. She writes to her mother in October: "If my husband will be amenable to propriety and duty, neither of my children will love one of their parents at the expense of the other." This suit was delayed, and a final issue was not obtained till the middle of 1836, a decision rendered in February in her favor, by default, having been appealed against. During this period of unrest, George Sand actually contemplated, in case she failed, running away to America with her children.

The months that had passed, however, were not without literary fruit. The works of the first period or style, besides those already mentioned, include *Leone Leoni*, 1835; *Simon, Lavinia*, and *Metella*, 1836. She also rewrote *Lélia* (of which she says: "Lélia is not myself . . . but she is my ideal."), modifying her first production of anger so that it should "harmonize with that of gentleness." *Leone Leoni* is a tale of a woman's incurable love. The heroine is a bourgeoisie, who has been ensnared by the wiles of a Venetian nobleman. She endures manifold sufferings and base indignities, yet her heart triumphs over her mind. While she rebels against the thrall in which she is held, she cannot break from it; and even when rescue is offered her by marriage with a man of heart, and all has been arranged to this end, she forsakes him in favor of the rascal who has wronged her. This morbid love, while alluring enough, does not offer us the type of woman whom we find attractive in the characters drawn by our author. In *Simon*, a new tone is dominant; there is light in the mind, hope in the heart. Herein she shows social prejudice overcome by deep and patient love.

The term of uncertainty due to the protracted legal proceedings had not been an idle one, nor does it seem to have deadened George Sand's appreciation of the external beauties of nature, or her enjoyment of physical exercise; for she writes cheerfully of her horseback rides at night, of the pleasure she takes in her surroundings at La Châtre, where she is entertained by friends near her own home during the pendency of the trial. She tells of the delight she experienced in watching the transition from night to day, which she speaks of as a "revolution apparently so uniform, but possessing a different character every day." Those evening rides, how much inspiration they furnished for the poet-novelist as she wandered along alone! how much of influence on her marvellous creative mind! In that breaking dawn, indistinct and fanciful, did she not see the image of society in its obscurity, and dream of the dawn of its hoped-for emancipation from the gloom of inequality and prejudice? She was once more face to face with nature, her back was turned upon the vanities of the proud and the machinations of the perverse. She was musing over the new teachings that had been given her. She sought "to believe in no other God than he who preaches justice and equality to men." How calming to her mind her communion with nature was at this time, and how refreshing to her fancy, may be inferred from her own words: "There is not a meadow, not a clump of trees, which, bathed in a lovely and brilliant sun, does not seem entirely Arcadian in my eyes. I teach you all the secrets of my happiness." In the woods, the streams, the sky, and the stars, George Sand found so many religious teachers. All her former spiritual tendencies reawakened, she tells us that through her prayers, few and poor though they were, she experienced a "foretaste of infinite ecstasies and exaltations like those

of my youth, when I used to believe that I saw the Virgin, like a white spot on a sun which moved about me. Now my visions are all about stars; but I begin to have strange dreams."

In September, 1836, after reëntering into possession of Nohant, George Sand took her two children with her on a visit to her friend, the Comtesse d'Agoult, at Geneva. In November, she was in Paris again, but not in her old *poet's attic*, for she occupied a suite of apartments in the Hôtel de France. Her son's health now occasioned her profound trouble. Symptoms of consumption were apparent. In her distress, she begs Monsieur Dudevant to aid her in her anxiety, and entreats him to share her care in effecting their son's recovery. We are able to understand her feelings and the rule of her conduct toward her children in respect of their father by her letter to Monsieur Dudevant. She pleads that their child's health stands before everything else; that, as she encourages the boy's affection for his father, the latter should abstain from thwarting his affection for his mother. She invites him to come to her house as often as he pleases, and volunteers to keep out of his way if her presence should be distasteful to Monsieur Dudevant. She concludes: "What interest could there now be for us to attack each other through the affection of a poor child who is all meekness and love?" A short time later, the boy had recovered his health in the Berry home.

In the following year, George Sand wrote *Mauprat*. In this book is traced the power of love over an impulsive heart that no culture of the mind has influenced. A gentle woman, pure and gracious, bred in accordance with the dictates of an aristocratic class, gives her love to a boor, and, ignoring all conventional decrees, deliberately chooses to drive the savage out of the nature of her lover,

and by his very love raise him to a level at which he stands her fellow and almost an exemplar for even the best of men. George Sand's faith in the transforming power of love is eloquently expressed in this work, in which also she shows the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

In her letters of this period, we find her imbued with strong Republican theories, insisting on the liberty and dignity of the individual, and inveighing against monarchical principles. In the same year, *Les Maitres Mosaïstes* appeared in the *Revue*. It was a short story, written for her son, telling of the adventures of the Venetian mosaic-workers. The character of Valerio, she says, was penned while she had in mind her friend Calamatta, the artist, who painted one of George Sand's portraits. Here we may give a word-picture of our author by Heine, who was a frequent visitor with her in the Comtesse d'Agoult's salon, and who saw much of George Sand at this period. "Her face might perhaps be described as more beautiful than interesting, yet the cast of her features is not severely antique, for it is softened by modern sentiment, which enwraps them with a veil of sadness. Her forehead is not lofty, and a wealth of most beautiful auburn hair falls on each side of her head to her shoulders. Her nose is not aquiline and decided, nor is it an intelligent little snub-nose. It is merely a straight and ordinary one. A most good-humored, though not very attractive, smile generally plays around her mouth; her lower lip, which is slightly inclined to droop, seems to suggest fatigue. Her chin is plump, but very beautifully formed, as are her shoulders, which are magnificent." So much for her physical traits. From the same source we learn that her voice was dull and muffled, with no sonorous tones, but sweet and pleasant. Her conversation he describes

as not being brilliant; that she possessed absolutely none of the sparkling wit that distinguishes her countrywomen; nor had she their inexhaustible power of chattering.

In the summer of 1837, the illness of Madame Dupin disturbed the peaceful and pleasurable life that George Sand was enjoying at Nohant. Hurrying to Paris, she remained with her mother during her last days, but was not present at the moment of her death; for having received a false alarm that her son had been abducted from Nohant, she had sent a messenger there, and had herself gone to Fontainebleau to receive her son, and during the night of her absence her mother had died. At Fontainebleau, George Sand remained with her son for some weeks, riding in the forest, gathering flowers, and chasing butterflies during the daytime, and writing closely at night. It was here that she wrote *La Dernière Aldini*, a novel reminiscent of Italy, and remarkable for its brilliant style and exquisite descriptions. The patrician lady, her daughter, and Lelio,—how distinct are the characters, how subtle the scenes, and with what ease the current of the romance flows amid the charming pictures that dazzle with their beauty!

Le Secrétaire Intime, *Lavinia*, and some others, also belong to this period, which was one of constant labor; for the obligation now resting on George Sand of maintaining her old home and providing for the education and future of her children was a heavy burden. By the legal decision of 1836, certain details of the arrangements between Monsieur Dudevant and his wife had been left to private settlement, a circumstance which brought about renewed conflict. The mother was in constant dread lest her son should be kidnapped; indeed, in the case of her daughter Solange, this actually appears to have been undertaken during the mother's stay at Fontainebleau. Another

arrangement was effected, by which all future friction was avoided, and the charge and education of Maurice, over whom his father had previously held joint control, was henceforward to rest solely with Madame Sand.

In the winter following, in consequence of the unsatisfactory condition of Maurice's health, a trip to Majorca was determined on, where it was hoped that the climate and a few months' change would reinvigorate him. The family was accompanied by the eminent composer, Chopin, who was suffering from phthisis. The stay in the island, however, was attended by the greatest inconveniences. Here George Sand devoted herself to the education of her children, to the household cooking and cleaning, to the care of her friend, and, lastly, to her literary labors. But the discomfort and extortion were such as to render the visit unendurable, and she left Spain with feelings of thankfulness for her departure, and with her son's health reestablished. The literary result of this stay is *Un Hiver à Majorque*, of whose scenery she says: "It is the promised land;" but of whose people she writes in the severest terms: "They are devout, that is to say, fanatical and bigoted, as in the days of the Inquisition. Friendship, loyalty, honor, exist here only in name. The wretches! oh, how I detest and despise them!"

In the cells of Valdemosa, an old and deserted Carthusian monastery, situated in a wild and noble landscape, George Sand found poetic surroundings and associations that were so congenial that she says: "Had I written there that part of *Lélia* which has a monastery for its scene, I should have produced a finer and more real picture." The occupation of rooms in this lonely old retreat was perhaps the only pleasurable feature of the stay in Majorca. It was here that *Spiridion* was finished: a tale of a young monk who is filled with the fervor of

divine love, but who later strays from his simple faith as the result of the agitations and doubts which philosophic teachings impart. This book probably reflects the experience of the author, more particularly that of her exaltation at the convent, and it also portrays her own spiritual conflicts and the calm of a sincere, broad faith that rises above dogma and rests secure in the divine love. After a short stay at Marseilles and a trip to Italy, George Sand returned to her home at Nohant.

We have now approached a period when Madame Sand's literary work was to show a change from the subjective lyricism of her previous works, which are the voice of her long-repressed early emotions, to a series of works in which she drew her inspiration largely from the religious, philosophic, and socialistic doctrines that her impressionable mind had espoused as expounding the true principles by which society and the individual should govern themselves. But, in yielding her art to the services of the reformers, George Sand had little thought for aught but the goodness of the principles, as they appeared to her, or, at any rate, had not taken measure of the practical difficulties within the circle of the reformers and those which passive resistance on the part of the great masses offered.

Before, however, the first of her books of the quasi-philosophical style appeared, our author made an essay as a playwright, and *Cosima*, a drama in five acts, was produced at the Théâtre Français. It was received with hisses and hooting.—George Sand writes of it, on May 1, 1840: "The whole audience condemned the play as being immoral, and I am not sure that the Government will not prohibit it. . . . It was played through, being much attacked by some, and equally defended by others, . . . and I will not alter a single word for the subsequent

representations." The scene was laid in Florence, and the period was the Middle Ages, both time and place being unsuited to the wholly French sentiment of the play.

Madame Sand had for some time been a regular contributor to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, but the novel *Horace*, written for its pages, was rejected by the editor as being of subversive tendencies; it was, therefore, published in the *Revue Indépendante*, a very advanced journal founded in 1840 by Pierre Leroux and Louis Viardot, to which George Sand gave her coöperation. This work portrays in its study of the titular character a sort of moral mountebank; the analysis is very clever and interesting of the weak, selfish man who for a time imposes with his claims for distinction, but who appears in his true light at last. Next came the *Compagnon du Tour de France*, in which socialist doctrines are the animating spirit. Though the freedom of the author's fancy clothes the subject and the characters with great interest and portrays many charming situations, yet there is a strained and not seldom unwelcome contrast presented by the necessity of keeping the individuals in line with the political purpose of the novel. Speaking of her writing, about this time, George Sand says: "Happily, I do not need to seek ideas; they are clearly fixed in my brain. I have no longer to struggle with doubts; these vanished like clouds in the light of conviction. I no longer have to examine my sentiments; their voice sounds aloud from the depths of my heart, and puts to silence all hesitation, literary pride, and fear of ridicule. So much has philosophy done for me."

In 1842, the beginning of *Consuelo* appeared in the *Revue Indépendante*, and its opening was so auspicious that the scope originally planned was considerably enlarged. The author tells us that she felt she had before her a grand subject and powerful types of character, with time, place,

and historic incidents of deep interest, in great profusion awaiting the explorer. The heroine of the work is a lovely portraiture: lofty in mind, noble in heart, and chaste in thought. *Consuelo* must ever remain one of George Sand's finest creations. The work abounds in interesting situations; the exuberant fancy and poetic spirit of the author find full play in a series of marvelous and fascinating adventures; and the characters are portrayed with subtle skill and vigor. Nor can the prolixity and gloomy meditations of Comte Albert check the reader's interest. The meeting of Consuelo and Haydn and the wonderful musical performances of these wayfarers present lovely and by no means impossible pictures. The influence of George Sand's friendship with Liszt, who stayed at Nohant during the summer of 1837, and with Chopin, with whom she was on equally close terms, is seen in this work. The *Comtesse de Rudolstadt* is perhaps less likely to arouse enthusiasm and sustained interest; Consuelo has become the Comtesse de Rudolstadt, and with the change not a little of the charm disappears in the mystifying allegory and humanitarian theories which obscure the artist's poetic fancy and brilliant description. This work likewise appeared in the *Revue Indépendante*, in 1843.

In 1845, George Sand wrote the *Meunier d'Angibault*, a work also written under the influence of Leroux's teachings. The socialist idea is presented in the person of an artisan, Lémor, who refuses to marry a rich widow because she is rich, and, consequently, such a union would do violence to his principles. Finally, a fire destroys the widow's château, and she rejoices at her deprivation, inasmuch as she is now no longer separated by the possession of her property from the man who adores her. While this and similar works created for their author

much enmity, their characters presented nothing but virtuous, if unrealizable, ideas. Following this, in 1846, appeared *La Mare au Diable*, an exquisite idyl, a gem of rural poetry. We can well imagine with what delight George Sand penned this touching and beautiful poem. The construction is of the simplest form. A ploughman, a widower, is about to seek a wife, as a prudential step; he undertakes the charge of a young peasant girl who is going to fill a place as shepherdess a few miles from her home. The way is lost, and they camp for the night under great oaks. Here, Marie chats till overcome by sleep, but Germain indulges in dreams which result in cooling his interest in his proposed marriage venture. The rest is easily understood; Germain and Marie become husband and wife. The incidents are all natural and the dénouement quite expected. The reader cannot forget the charming story.

During the years since her final arrangement with Monsieur Dudevant, the home life of George Sand had been one of tranquillity and ease. We find her generally at Nohant, enjoying the society of her chosen friends; an entertaining hostess, retiring in disposition, and giving of her means with a liberal hand to those in need about her; caring with the tenderest solicitude for the present happiness and future welfare of her children; despising glory, and devoting herself to her literary work with assiduity. In May, 1847, a domestic event of unusual importance transpired. Madame Sand's daughter, Solange, was married to Monsieur Clésinger, respecting which she writes to the famous Italian patriot, Mazzini: "I have just married my daughter, and, as I believe, satisfactorily, to an artist of great talent and purpose. My only ambition for the dear creature was that she should love and be loved in return; my wish is gratified."

In this same year, *Lucrezia Floriani* appeared. The titular heroine is a cantatrice of fame, which, however, she despises, and early in life she retires from the world. Her noble character, which her experiences had failed to mar, attracts the devoted attachment of a prince. His protestations lead Lucrezia to think that each will find in the other the happiness desired. But Prince Karol soon entertains jealous sentiments concerning events of the earlier years of Lucrezia's life. The misery consequent on the prince's despotism year by year crushes Lucrezia's life. The chief interest in this work is, perhaps, due to the persistent determination to read therein an attack on Chopin, whose long-continued friendship with George Sand was broken at this time. The evidences of such an attack certainly appear very unsubstantial, nor does it seem that the eminent composer himself recognized it, at least until he had been influenced to do so by others. She says of it herself that it is "entirely an analytical and meditative work." It is a masterful presentment of the inception, development, and destructive culmination of jealousy.

In 1847, also, *Le Pêché de Monsieur Antoine* appeared, in which the sentiments of Michel, of Bourges, find expression, and we cannot but sympathize with the victims of the social and political systems that George Sand depicts with so much energy and denunciatory style. We miss, however, once more the spontaneous poetry, the vivid imagination, that are natural to the writer, or, rather, it would be more correct to say that the beauty of such is obscured by the dissertations that are essential to the corrective aims in view. This vein of literary wealth was happily interrupted by *Il Piccinino*, an engrossing novel of Sicilian life. A family, owing to secret enmity, has been obliged to seek refuge in Rome. After

a time, the father and the daughter return to Sicily, leaving the son and brother in Rome to pursue his art study. The latter returns later, having been unable to make his way. He later sees Princesse Agathe Palmarosa, whose kindly attentions to him have a mysterious appearance, and he becomes deeply enamored of her. He finds a terrible rival in Il Piccinino, a bandit, but the power of the princess suffices to control the bandit, and it is discovered that the young painter is the son of the princess. The style of the work, with its romantic situations and fascinating adventures, and the strongly accented characters make it remarkable.

François le Champi next appeared, in the feuilleton of the *Journal des Débats*. It is a simple pastoral of Berry, a centre sacred to George Sand by her lifelong associations. She was familiar with every detail of the landscape about her. Every nook and corner was filled with eloquent voices that her ear understood. In this book she adopts the dialect of the province. Madelon, a childless wife, is moved to pity for the poor foundling, François; she supplies almost the place of a mother to him, while he returns her affection as a son. Later, however, this relation of love changes, and they become husband and wife. There is little of intricacy in this rustic poem, but it exactly suits the genius of the author. As to her choice of this dialect, it is not without interest to read her own views thereon, which are expressed in her letter to Mazzini of July 28, 1847: "I entertain great respect and liking for the language of the peasants; in my judgment, it is the more correct."

At this time, Madame Sand had undertaken to write the *Histoire de ma Vie*, the source of many details given in this notice; and as a commentary on the spirit of its author, we may quote some of her remarks: "Our own

lives are a part of our environments, and we can never exonerate ourselves without being obliged to accuse somebody; sometimes our best friend. But it is my desire to avoid accusing or wounding anybody. That would be hateful to me, and I should suffer more than my victims." An event was approaching which threw into the shade the *Histoire* and all work in hand: the Revolution of 1848.

This was the hour when George Sand's fervent nature was to carry her into the vortex of politics, and for months the power of her energy was directed on a series of *Lettres au Peuple* and *Bulletins du Ministère de l'Intérieur*. The spirit that animated her may be illustrated by her own words, written from Paris in March, 1848: "Situated as we now are, we must show not merely devotion and loyalty, but also, if required, fanaticism. We must rise above ourselves, forswear all weakness, and even brush aside our affections if they should run counter to the onward course of a power elected by the people." She is sincere in her convictions, fearless of the consequences of doing what she believes to be right, and always full of faith in the people. She both twits and tries to strengthen Lamartine and other leaders. But she is optimistic, for, before very long, she finds strange omens of the destruction of the Republic. Her letters during the stormy period of its existence are most interesting from a historical point of view, but it is unnecessary here to follow our author in her political career. Alternately hopeful and despairing in face of *ententes* and conspiracies, she continued her active interest and eloquent support to the Republic by her articles in the *Bulletin de la République*, the *Cause du Peuple*, and other journals. The excitements and disappointments of this period were the cause of many disillusionments, not, however, as to principle, but as to persons and methods. She bids adieu to politics,

with a bruised heart. In a letter to Mazzini in September, 1850, she describes her feelings thus: "Hope has not revived in me, and I am not one to sing songs that do not spring from my soul. . . . I return to fiction. . . . I make popular types such as I no longer see, but such as they should and might be. In art, it is still feasible to substitute dreaming for reality; in politics, all poetry is a lie, which conscience rejects."

So, on the closing of her connection with politics, we find her at Nohant taking up her interrupted work and finishing *François le Champi*, followed by *La Petite Fadette*, in which her own genius shone forth with undimmed lustre. What interest she arouses in the reader in Fanchon and the twin brothers, and how graceful and alluring are the moral pictures she draws! We can fancy that the writing of these tales must have been a balm to the soul wearied by its struggles for a lost cause.

During a year previous to September, 1850, George Sand had been giving her attention once more to dramatic art, which, she writes: "Being novel to me, has restored me of late somewhat, and it is the only work to which I have been able to apply myself for an entire year." Her experience of the reception of *Cosima* in no way seems to have discouraged her. Indeed, we know that she expressed herself as satisfied. *François le Champi*, a pastoral comedy adapted from her novel of the same title, was produced in 1849 at the Odéon. Its success was genuine, and was followed by *Claudie*, in 1851, which was likewise received with public favor; their simple rural qualities were a novelty which was heartily appreciated. This period of labor was interrupted by the political situation in 1851, which had become turbulent: numberless arrests had been made; among others, of many of her oldest comrades and friends, and Madame Sand emerged from her retirement,

not as a passionate writer, but as a pleader with President Louis Napoléon in behalf of the unfortunates involved, in which she was successful in a number of individual cases. The drama *Mattre Favilla*, produced at the Odéon, was also written at this period; it had been performed previously at the private theatre at Nohant, which had for years been one of the delightful pastimes of the home circle.

In the same year, she wrote *Le Mariage de Victorine*, a society comedy, which met with deserved success; and in 1852, *Les Vacances de Pandolphe*, a piece written, she says, "while anguish was gnawing my soul." In 1853, another drama appeared: *Le Pressoir*; it is a story of rural life, and, like its predecessors of the same kind, it enjoyed a very favorable reception. This series of excursions into bucolic scenes carried George Sand's popularity to the point of enthusiastic appreciation. The novel *Les Mattres Sonneurs* was also written in 1853; it deals with rustic life of the century before, and is a delightful specimen of the author's imaginative work.

We must, however, pass over many of the minor works that go to make up the imperishable monument to the fame of this great writer. In 1855, the *Histoire de ma Vie* was published, which consists of a series of narratives of particular circumstances of her life rather than a close or connected autobiography. We have already seen that George Sand was constrained, in the preparation of this work, to sacrifice much to her sensitiveness on the score of others.

In the early part of this year, 1855, a great calamity befell Madame Sand. Her much-loved granddaughter, Jeanne Clésinger, to whom she was devoted, died; she of whom she writes, in December, 1852: "I have a charming little girl (my daughter's), on whom I bestow great care and much time." This event rendered her

very despondent, and, not long after, she made a journey to Italy, which restored her health; for, she writes, she came back "cured." The impressions of this journey were embodied in *La Daniella*, a novel that appeared shortly after. These impressions were not wholly pleasing, certainly not as to Rome, which, in a letter, George Sand describes as "horribly ugly and filthy."

But, despite her fancy for the drama, George Sand did not forsake romances; she soon produced some works of a semi-historic kind. Of these, *Les Beaux Messieurs de Bois-Doré* was published in 1857; it relates to the period of Louis XIII, and is a powerfully romantic work that appeals by its exciting incidents and rich descriptive quality. This was later dramatized and produced in 1862, and proved a great triumph for the author. Two years later, *Elle et Lui* was given to the world, and the public was for the first time taken into George Sand's confidence as to the brief intimacy between herself and Alfred de Musset, broken more than a quarter of a century before. The novel was published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and although many details are, of course, largely artistic fictions, yet it is recognized that the author is speaking of herself in the person of the heroine, Thérèse, and of De Musset in that of the strangely whimsical painter, Laurent. Whatever may be said of the wisdom of parading the miseries of the two quondam friends, it must not be forgotten that De Musset had long before railed at her in his writings, and the publication of *Elle et Lui* by Madame Sand is not without strong justification.

In 1859, also, appeared *L'Homme de Neige*, a most fantastic work of imagination whose scene is laid in Sweden. It abounds in enchanting details and excellent character sketches; the period is the eighteenth century. The use of the marionette player and his performances are

noteworthy as showing the interest the author took in such exhibitions, and of how great use they may be made artistically. At Nohant, the puppet-show had long been a favorite; we learn that more than twenty plays were prepared for it, and that the little puppet-actors numbered more than a hundred.

Pierre qui Roule was written at this time. The Rolling Stone is a law student in Paris, who becomes enamored of a genuinely talented and virtuous young actress, for love of whom he abandons his hopes of bar and bench and joins a theatrical company. The delineation of character and the wealth of incident and adventure in this book render it one of the most attractive of George Sand's works. The story was later continued as *Le Beau Laurence*, which will be mentioned further on.

The next important work was the *Marquis de Villemer*, a society romance, in which the analysis of character is extremely fine, and the variety of incidents amazing. The aristocratic marquise, her two sons, and Caroline de Saint-Geneix keep the reader's interest throughout. They seem real persons, as we read the pages, so clearly and distinctly are their individualities maintained. This popular novel was dramatized in 1864, and performed successfully. The qualities of the drama are manifestly superior to most of the author's work as a playwright, whether due to the aid given her by Alexandre Dumas the Younger, as is reasonably supposed, or not. This drama and *Le Mariage de Victorine* are generally regarded as the two plays on which George Sand's reputation as a dramatist mainly rests. The latter was admittedly inspired by Sedaine's *Le Philosophe sans le Savoir*. Her contributions as a playwright number more than a score, but of most of them it may be said that they demonstrate that the author's true vocation was not found in writing for the stage.

Jean de la Roche is a work of this period, the ripened period when experience, both of life and the art of her craft, had furnished the author with the keenest perception of the forces of the one and the requisites of the other. The phase of love that is used as the controlling influence in the development of the subject of the work is that of the heroine for her little brother, whose jealousy of her lover prevents the marriage of the happy and favored pair. The skill employed in depicting the incidents which lead to the removal of this obstacle is beyond praise.

Late in 1860, Madame Sand was at work on the opening of *La Famille de Germandre*, when she was stricken down by typhoid fever; but its completion was delayed until the spring of 1861, when she had regained her health after a stay at Tamaris. In this year also appeared *Antonia*. In 1862, Madame Sand saw the fulfilment of a cherished design: her son Maurice was married to Mademoiselle Calamatta, an event which was a source of great joy to Madame Sand, for the husband and wife settled at Nohant, and thus kept the home circle intact.

The following year, *Mademoiselle de La Quintinie* appeared, but its chief interest is that it was so strong in controversy that it aroused the anger of the clergy. That it had seized upon the popular sympathy seems to be indicated by George Sand's remarks in a letter to her son, from Paris, March 1, 1864, wherein she says: "I have just returned [she had been witnessing the first performance of *Villemer*], attended by the students, who shouted: 'George Sand for ever! *Mademoiselle de La Quintinie* for ever!'" This work can hardly be ranked among the author's important works.

Of her later works, it may be said that *L'Autre*, the latest of her plays that were quite successful, was adapted

with considerable modification from the author's novel *La Confession d'une jeune Fille*, which had been published six years earlier. Madame Sarah Bernhardt played the heroine's part, and it is interesting to read George Sand's opinion of this talented actress, of whom she writes in October, 1871: "Sarah does not give more consolation [than another leading actress whose foibles had greatly worried Madame Sand], unless her ways have been considerably modified. She is an excellent girl, but she does not study, and is concerned only about enjoying herself. When acting her rôle, she improvises it, which, though sometimes effective, is not always accurate." *Le Beau Laurence* is the sequel to *Pierre qui Roule*, and both works are tales of actors and stage adventures. The incidents are full of variety, and the descriptions picturesque and daring. The heroine of the story, Impéria, is a pure and lovely character, who is delineated with consummate skill; while the other characters, such as would be found in a strolling troupe, are cleverly drawn and handled. Love is, of course, the pivotal force, and here again Madame Sand has shown her wonderful powers of imagination and artistic excellence by unravelling her plot in the most attractive and artistic fashion.

Le Château de Pictordu, *La Tour de Percemont*, *Le Chêne Parlant*, *Les Dames Vertes*, *Le Diable au Champ*, as well, of course, as the *Contes d'une Grand'mère*, were written for the pleasure and instruction of her grandchildren. They not merely discover fresh treasures of imagination, but take us back to the impressions of the author's early childhood days at Nohant. In the *Journal d'un Voyageur pendant le Siège*, we have the impressions of a close observer, a record of events and conditions which escape the formal historian, and the reflections of a matured mind directed by an active participation in the public

affairs of her time. *Nanon* is a tale of the Revolutionary period, and is a very picturesque work, full of spirit and touching incidents. The rustic heroine is another of the sweet women characters that George Sand has known so well how to depict; the signs of old age are certainly not discoverable in this fresh and entertaining work.

Besides these, the last ten years of her life produced *Malgré Tout*, *Francia*, *un Bienfait n'est jamais perdu*, *Impressions et Souvenirs*, *Ma Sœur Jeanne*, *La Laitière et le Pot au Lait*, *Les deux Frères*, *Flamarande*, *Marianne*, *Dernières Pages*, *Légendes Rustiques*, *Fanchette*, *Nouvelles Lettres d'un Voyageur*. The last work of the great author was a critique on Renan's *Dialogues et Fragments Philosophiques*; it is dated May 6, 1876.

During the same month, Madame Sand had manifested to her anxious family the evidences of an illness of which she still ignored the importance; but at the close of the month, she yielded to their wish that medical treatment should be resorted to. The hold of internal paralysis was, however, too secure, and on June 8th she glided quietly, imperceptibly, over the borderland of life.

Such, in brief, is the life of this extraordinarily gifted woman. We are amazed when we consider the stupendous work she accomplished: the whole list of her writings forms a monumental undertaking. Only the possession of a singularly rare genius could have produced such results. We know from her letters that Madame Sand's literary work was almost a spontaneous creation; her real work consisted in her maternal cares and her vast correspondence. She has said that she sometimes forgot the titles of her works, and that she could not recall the names of her characters or the method by which she worked out her subject. We cannot fail to see that she wrote from the impulse or fulness of her

heart, and that her unhewed thoughts were enriched by a golden eloquence with a charm of grace that far excels the results of more carefully wrought-out works.

As a flower unconsciously takes its tints and scents from the elements by which it is surrounded, so George Sand drew from her environments the tone and character of her works. We see throughout, a lack of system, of coördination; it is manifest, of course, that there was artistic modification and development, but there is no strong evidence that the education of the artist counts for much in the success of our author. Among the finest of her works are those which early appeared,—the impulsive outpouring of her heart. She is at her best when unfolding the picture of nature treasured in her mind; when giving free rein to the development of the rôle of the characters conceived by her ardent and poetic imagination; then there is a sweet music in her language and a fervor in her descriptions that wholly fascinate. Like her love of nature, was her fondness for the marvellous. We are told that she vividly remembered her first doubt as to the existence of Father Christmas. This moment was a sorrowful one for the tiny child. How marked this characteristic was, we see in her enjoyment of the fairy-tales and folk-lore which she shared with her child-companions and the peasants at Nohant, and later at the convent; again it finds voice in *Consuelo*, *The Snow Man*, and the plays and stories written for her children and grandchildren.

George Sand's imagination was never at rest. To it her greatness and much of her suffering are alike traceable. In her friendships, she conceived too lofty an ideal; few persons could bear the test of her standard: her mother, her grandmother, her husband, political and social guides—all suffered from the discrepancy between her

estimate of what they should be and what they were. To this fact it seems not altogether unreasonable to attribute the succession of reproaches, embroilments, and separations that attended the career of this marvellous woman. She is glad to escape from the distress she suffers from her mother's angry outbreaks and find relief with the Duplessis family; she finds life intolerable with her husband; again, there is evidence that the same exacting ideal was responsible for the differences with De Musset, Pagello, Chopin, Michel, Lammenais, and even Mazzini. Once a principle was believed to be right, she could not fetter its application by any considerations of expediency. At least, this is generally so as to the early years; later, it underwent some modification. Conscious of her own rectitude, Madame Sand fearlessly gave utterance to the decisions of her energetic mind. With her, a sentiment speedily becomes a feeling, and the feeling calls for expression. "My calling is to abhor evil, to love good, and to bend the knee to the beautiful," is her conviction in 1836, as she states it.

As in her novels, so in her political writings George Sand pursued an ideal. In a letter to her friend Mazzini, written in 1850, she says: "My Communism supposes men to be quite different from what they are, but such as I feel they should be. The ideal, the dream of my social happiness, is in the sentiments I feel in myself." She acted from the heart more than from the mind; she could not reduce her principles to a formula, of which, she says, if she had one: "I would part with it very cheaply." And again: "My whole heart is in what I say to you; when you are fully acquainted with me, you will know that you can blindly trust in the instinct of my heart."

It has been asserted that George Sand's works, or many of them, are repugnant to the sense of morality.

Before saying anything in refutation, let us present the creed of the author in her own words, written to her friend, the Comtesse d'Agoult, in 1836: "To rush into the bosom of Mother Nature, to consider her really as a *mother* and a *sister*; to resist with all obstinacy the proud and wicked; to be meek and lowly with the wretched ones; to weep over the poor man's misery, and hope for the fall of the rich as my only consolation; to believe in no other God than He who preaches justice and equality to men; to venerate what is *good*; to judge severely what is *only* strong; to live on nearly nothing; to give almost everything, in order to reëstablish primitive equality and to restore divine institutions—such is the religion I would proclaim in my humble retreat." Nor was this creed belied, even to the giving "almost everything"; for we find Madame Sand writing to Monsieur Ulbach, in November, 1869: "I have earned by my writings about a million, but I have not laid aside a single *sou*. I gave away all, except twenty thousand francs, which I invested two years ago, so that if I fall ill my children will not be put to too much expense; and yet I am not sure that I shall be able to keep even that little fund, for I may meet with people who may need it more imperatively than myself."

But to return to the charge we have mentioned, which is still made in some quarters, and which, at the most, will apply less to matter than to manner. Let each individual test the question by his own sentiment and judgment. Who has put down one of George Sand's books and felt himself less pure from the reading? Nay, more, who has gone from its perusal without a quickened admiration of virtue and a corresponding dislike of vice? If our sympathies are frequently aroused for the transgressor, is this something of which to be ashamed in itself? If we look at the offences laid to the charge of the author,

is there not found a manifest purpose on her part to present a victim who will arouse interest enough to give force to the author's denunciations of the system she would overthrow, and to whose charge she would ascribe the offence of her victim? Are these victims impure of heart and vicious of purpose? The charge in question is mainly directed at *Indiana*, *Valentine*, and *Lélia*. Let us see what Madame Sand says in a letter in 1842: "I find society abandoned to the most dreadful disorder, and in the front rank of the iniquities to which I see it given over are the relations of the sexes, which I regard as being regulated in the most unjust and ridiculous manner. . . . Love, fidelity, and motherhood are, notwithstanding, the most necessary, the most important, and the most sacred things in a woman's life." Her attacks were directed, be it understood, not against marriage, but against the debasing and unjust conditions under which, in her judgment, a woman's marriage placed her, and against which Madame Sand revolted, and gloried in her revolt. Her fault, if it must be called such, is that her sentiment was aroused, and the exuberance of her eloquence and the vividness of her imagination impelled her to a directness of attack that spared nothing. Nor were the conditions of society confronting the author such as to suggest concession on her part, and it is difficult to see how the prevailing taste should have been shocked, at least by her matter. But there was another powerful opposition—a religious one.

To certain practices and duties of the Roman Catholic Church, George Sand could not bend her conscience, and her conviction thereon is found in a letter to a curé, written in 1844, in which she says: "Since the spirit of liberty has been suppressed in the Church, since in Catholic doctrine there is no longer a place for discussions, counsels,

progress, or light, I regard that doctrine as a dead letter set as a political check under thrones and above peoples. It is for me a dark veil obscuring the word of Christ—a false interpretation of the sublime Gospels, and an insurmountable obstacle to the sacred equality that God promises, which God will grant to men, on earth as in Heaven.” Hence it was that our author found herself at variance with the ecclesiastical teaching; but it seems somewhat difficult to find in her works an anti-Christ belief; she is full of faith in the divine love and mercy; hers is a broad, tolerant creed. A great stride has been made toward liberality in religious belief since George Sand wrote the works that were attacked, and it is not likely that on this score they would arouse any serious outcry against their author had they been written in these days.

But to the two points we have indicated—for the pardonable eccentricities of the woman scarcely deserve notice—is due the denunciation of George Sand’s works. What, then, must be the power, the rare qualities, which made them triumph over powerful opposition and acquired for the author a world-wide fame, and which during her life secured her the homage and esteem of her nation? Monsieur de Latouche, her first literary mentor, said: “Your qualities transcend your defects.” These qualities are a vivid poetic imagination, a passionate love of nature, a sincere and loyal purpose, a tender sympathy for the weak and oppressed, an innate hatred of injustice, a keenly observant mind, a prompt and vigorous power of analysis of the human heart and mind, and an eloquence that is irresistible. It is almost useless to compare George Sand with any other writer. She stands alone; her mind and her energy are virile, her heart is a woman’s. When all allowance is made for defects of style, for the family

likeness perceived in many of her characters, for the discursive tendency that is at times marked, and for the weakness of the dramatic element—we are conscious of a charm that enchants, an interest that entrains, and a skill that engrosses. She sought no model, looked to no teachers; but presented an ideal. She wrote as she believed; her individuality is inseparable from her works; hence, no little of their charm. To use her own words, the reader “feels he has to do with a living soul, not with a mere instrument.”

Of the woman, it is less easy to speak. She was early placed in a singular position; lacking the prudent and consistent training that might have produced more settled views and different tendencies, she was left to form her own opinions out of the chaotic instruction she had obtained. Contradictory elements were at work about and within her. Her heart was loving and tender, her impulses affectionate and good; but before her judgment could be formed, her affections were bruised, her tenderness was slighted.

Buffeted by the storms of passion and grief, George Sand's true life as a woman can hardly be said to have commenced till she settled down at Nohant in the full repossession of her children and her home. In the unrestrained enjoyment of her duties as a mother, we find the woman. How peaceful, how lovely, was that life with her family and friends about her! All the treasures of her soul were lavishly bestowed on her children; their present enjoyment and their future welfare her happiness and care; and, as the years roll on, the same tenderness is bestowed on her grandchildren. Madame Sand's letters throw a brilliant light on this heart-satisfying life, during which her literary work was carried on unceasingly, or only interrupted by occasional visits to Paris on business,

or to seek clemency at the hand of the Emperor on behalf of some political victims, or by trips for health.

We find her bestowing of her earnings in charity to those in need about her, and helping modestly to alleviate the sufferings of those with whom she is brought in contact; helping with advice and encouragement those who seek her counsel in literary matters; coming forth from her solitude when national peril threatens, and stirring with the fervor of her eloquence as she had appealed to her countrymen on political and social questions. Happily, these latter wanderings from her true vocation, brilliant as they were, were not for long periods; but it is interesting to note that from first to last she espoused the cause of the people without wavering. Her instincts were wholly democratic, nor, although time and careful observation later imposed restraint on the former impetuous journalist, did she at any time sacrifice an iota of her principles; only, she came to recognize that it was impossible to change the course of society by a theoretical exposition of principles, and abandoned the idea of curing social ills by mere strenuous declamation.

In 1870, when the darkest hours were gathering over her beloved country, and its future government was at stake, her invincible faith in humanity was reiterated. She writes: "Let us believe in humanity, for he who doubts it, doubts himself." She had learned by experience that patient waiting is a virtue, that events cannot be forced to an untimely issue with good results. "I have seen revolutions," she writes in 1872, "and closely observed the actors in them; I sounded the depths of their souls,—I should perhaps say, of their bags : lack of principles !"

In reviewing her life, in 1872, George Sand writes to Gustave Flaubert: "Do not laugh at the principles of a very candid child, principles which I held throughout life,

through *Lélia* and the romantic period, through love and doubt, through enthusiasm and disappointment. Love, self-sacrifice, the repossession of my own self only in cases where my sacrifice was hurtful to the objects of it, and further abnegation with the hope of serving some true cause,—such has been my life, such my conception of love.” Madame Sand is not here speaking of personal passion, but of the love of the species, of the extension of the sentiment of self-love, of the horror of *self only*.

In the literary beginnings of younger authors George Sand took the warmest interest, and unsparingly and judiciously advised and encouraged them. Her counsel and tender solicitude in the case of Flaubert and many others show how large was her heart and how untiring her aid. Concerning her views on her art, her opinion is well expressed in a letter written in the last year of her life: “Art should be the seeking for truth, and the latter consists in something more than representing evil *or* good. The *artiste* who notices but the blemishes is as incomplete as he who brings forth only good qualities.” The imaginative played in Madame Sand a greater part than the real. Love was the force out of which all that is good or just should spring; she says: “He who abstains from love, abstains from justice.”

This great writer, whose works have triumphed over prejudice and secured her a homage that rarely falls to the lot of authors, was as unassuming as she was brilliant and fearless. She disliked all parade, and while ever ready and prompt to come to the front when circumstances rendered her prominence necessary or desirable, she preferred retirement. Of her literary claims she says, in her calm old age: “I have never entertained the pretension of being a first-rate writer. My object has been to react on my contemporaries, even were they

only a few, and to induce them to partake of my ideal of meekness and poetry."

After an interval of usual reaction from great popularity, which George Sand's works have not escaped, a reawakened interest has come. Time has removed many prejudices, and her aim and intent are better understood. Of the multitude of works she has contributed, it is not too venturesome to assert that posterity will cherish many of her romances as classic treasures. As long as the human heart feels the burden of the real life, so long will men and women take delight and comfort in the ideal life; in wandering amid scenes that will shed a cheering ray to lighten the gloom and brighten the sadness of our real world. Nor will it be found that George Sand takes us so out of the reality that we shall experience only a mere wondering diversion. She indeed pictures life as it should, and might, be; but she also describes it as she sees it; she feels what she writes; she reads and interprets the "never-changing language of nature"; she recognizes that the romance must be human before all else, and assumes that true reality consists in a mixture of good and evil. Her writings are too interestingly human for humanity to lose its appreciation of those of them that are not precluded by special reasons from enjoying lasting fame.

J. A. B.

Philadelphia, 1902.



SHE AND HE

TO MADEMOISELLE JACQUES

"MY DEAR THÉRÈSE:

"Since you permit me not to call you mademoiselle, let me tell you an important piece of news in *the world of art*, as our friend Bernard says. Ah! there's a rhyme;* but what I am going to tell you has neither rhyme nor reason.

"Fancy that yesterday, after boring you with my visit, I found, on returning to my rooms, an English milord (by the way, perhaps he isn't a milord; but he surely is an Englishman), who said to me in his dialect:

" 'Are you a painter?'

" 'Yes, milord.'

" 'You paint faces?'

" 'Yes, milord.'

" 'And the hands?'

" 'Yes, milord; also the feet.'

" 'Good!'

" 'Very good!'

" 'Oh! I am sure of it! well, would you like to paint my portrait?'

" 'Yours?'

" 'Why not?'

"The *why not* was said with so much good humor, that I ceased to take him for an idiot, especially as this

* Dans le monde des arts, comme dit our friend Bernard.

son of Albion is a magnificent man. He has the head of an Antinous on the shoulders of—well, of an Englishman; he is a Greek type of the best epoch on the bust, somewhat strangely dressed and cravatted, of a perfect specimen of Britannic *fashion*.

“‘Faith!’ said I, ‘you are a fine model, that is sure, and I should like to make a study of you for my own benefit; but I cannot paint your portrait.’”

“‘Why not, pray?’”

“‘Because I am not a portrait-painter.’”

“‘Oh! Do you pay here in France for a license to practise this or that specialty in art?’”

“‘No; but the public doesn’t permit us to follow more than one branch. They insist upon knowing what to expect, especially when we are young; and if I who am speaking, and who am very young, should have the ill-luck to paint a good portrait of you, I should find it very difficult to succeed at the next Exposition with anything but portraits; and, in like manner, if I made only a moderately good one, I should be forbidden ever to try another: the public would pass judgment to the effect that I had not the essential qualities of a portrait-painter, and that I was a presumptuous fellow to make the attempt.’”

“‘I told my Englishman much more nonsense, which I spare you, and which made him open his eyes; after which he began to laugh, and I saw clearly that my arguments inspired in him the most profound contempt for France, if not for your humble servant.’”

“‘Let us say the word,’ he said. ‘You do not like portrait-painting.’”

“‘What! what sort of a clown do you take me for? Say, rather, that I do not as yet dare to paint portraits, and that I could not do it, since it must be one of two

things: either a specialty, which admits no rivals, or perfection, and, as one might say, the crown of talent. Certain painters, incapable of inventing anything, are able to copy faithfully and agreeably the living model. These are sure of success, provided that they have the knack of presenting the model in its most favorable aspect, and of costuming it becomingly while costuming it according to the fashion; but, when one is only a poor historical painter, very much of a novice, and of disputed talent, as I have the honor to be, one cannot contend against the people who make it a business. I confess that I have never studied conscientiously the folds of a black coat and the peculiar idiosyncrasies of a given face. I am unfortunate as an inventor of attitudes, types, and expressions. All these must yield to my subject, my idea, my dream, if you choose. If you would permit me to costume you to suit myself, and to place you in a picture of my own invention—— But no, that would be good for nothing, it wouldn't be you. It would not be a portrait to give your mistress—much less your lawful wife. Neither of them would recognize you. So do not ask me now to do what I may perhaps be able to do some day, if I ever happen to become a Rubens or a Titian, because then I can remain a poet and creator, while grasping, without effort and without fear, the potent and majestic reality. Unfortunately, it is not likely that I shall ever become anything more than a madman or a fool. Read Messieurs So-and-So and So-and-So, who have said as much in their criticisms.'

"You can imagine, Thérèse, that I did not say to my Englishman a word of what I have said to you; one can always arrange one's thoughts better when talking to one's self; but of all that I could say to excuse myself for not painting his portrait, nothing had any effect but

these few words: 'Why the devil don't you apply to Mademoiselle Jacques?'

"He said *Oh!* three times, after which he asked me for your address, and off he went without the slightest comment, leaving me exceedingly confused and irritated because I could not finish my dissertation on portrait-painting; for, after all, my dear Thérèse, if that handsome brute of an Englishman comes to see you to-day, as I believe he is capable of doing, and repeats to you all I have written you, that is to say, all that I did not say to him, about the *faiseurs* and the great masters, what will you think of your ungrateful friend? May he place you among the first, and judge you incapable of painting anything else than pretty portraits which please everybody! Ah! my dear friend, if you had heard all that I said to him about you—after he had gone! You know what it was; you know that in my eyes you are not Mademoiselle Jacques, who paints excellent portraits that are much in vogue, but a superior man disguised as a woman, who, although he has never made the Academy, divines and has the art of making others divine a whole body and a whole soul from a bust, after the manner of the great sculptors of antiquity and the great painters of the Renaissance. But I say no more; you are not fond of having people tell you what they think of you. You pretend to take such talk for mere compliments. You are very proud, Thérèse.

"I am altogether down in the mouth to-day, I don't know why. I breakfasted so poorly this morning—I have never eaten with so little satisfaction since I have had a cook. And then one cannot get any good tobacco now-days. The government monopoly poisons you. And then I have a pair of new boots which don't fit at all. And then it rains. And then—and then—I don't know

what. The days have been as long as days without bread, for some time past, don't you find them so? No, you don't, of course. You know nothing of this feeling of gloom, the pleasure that bores, the boredom that intoxicates, the nameless disease of which I spoke to you the other evening in the little lilac salon where I would like to be now; for I have a horrible light for painting, and not being able to paint, it would please me to bore you to death by my conversation.

"So I shall not see you to-day! You have an insupportable family who steal you from your most delightful friends! In that case I shall be driven to do some foolish thing this evening! Such is the effect of your kindness to me, my dear, tall comrade. It makes me so stupid and so good for nothing when I do not see you, that I absolutely must divert myself at the risk of shocking you. But never fear, I will not tell you how I employ my evening.

"Your friend and servant,

"LAURENT.

"May 11, 183-."

TO M. LAURENT DE FAUVEL

"First of all, my dear Laurent, I entreat you, if you have any friendship for me, not to indulge too often in foolish things which injure your health. I will wink at all others. You may ask me to mention one such, and I should be sadly embarrassed to do it; for I know very few foolish things which are not injurious. So I must needs find out what you call by that name. If you mean one of those long suppers you spoke about the other day,

I think that they are killing you, and I am in despair. What are you thinking of, in God's name, to ruin thus, with a smile on your lips, an existence so precious and beautiful? But you want no sermons; I confine myself to prayers.

"As for your Englishman, who is an American, I have seen him, and as I shall not see you to-night or to-morrow, to my great regret, I must tell you that you were altogether wrong not to consent to do his portrait. He would have offered you the eyes out of his head, and with an American like Dick Palmer, the eyes out of his head means a goodly number of bank-notes, of which you stand in need to prevent you from doing foolish things, that is to say, from haunting gambling-houses in the hope of a stroke of fortune which never comes to people of imagination, because people of imagination do not know how to play cards, because they always lose, and because they must thereupon appeal to their imagination for the wherewithal to pay their debts—a trade to which that princess does not feel adapted, and to which she cannot adapt herself except by setting fire to the poor body she inhabits.

"You find me very outspoken, do you not? That does not matter to me. Moreover, if we approach the subject from a more exalted standpoint, all the reasons that you gave to your American and me are not worth two sous. That you do not know how to paint portraits is possible, nay, it is certain, if it must be done under the conditions which attend vulgar success in that art; but Monsieur Palmer did not stipulate that it should be so. You took him for a green-grocer, and you made a mistake. He is a man of judgment and taste, who knows what he is talking about, and who has an enthusiastic admiration for you. Judge whether I gave him a warm welcome!

He came to me as a makeshift; I saw it plainly enough, and I was grateful to him for it. So I consoled him by promising to do all that I possibly could to induce you to paint him. We will talk about it the day after to-morrow, for I have made an appointment with the said Palmer for that evening, so that he may assist me to plead his own cause, and may carry away your promise.

"And now, my dear Laurent, console yourself as best you can for not seeing me for two days. It will not be difficult for you: you know many bright people, and you have a footing in the best society. For my part, I am only an old sermonizer who is very fond of you, who implores you not to go to bed late every night, and who advises you to carry nothing to excess or abuse. You have no right to do it: genius imposes obligations.

"Your comrade,

"THÉRÈSE JACQUES."

TO MADEMOISELLE JACQUES

"MY DEAR THÉRÈSE:

"I start in two hours for the country, with the Comte de S—— and Prince D——. There will be youth and beauty in the party, so I am assured. I promise and swear to you to do nothing foolish and to drink no champagne—without reproaching myself bitterly therefor! What can you expect? I should certainly have preferred to lounge in your great studio, and talk nonsense in your little lilac salon; but since you are in retirement with your thirty-six provincial cousins, you will certainly not notice my absence the day after to-morrow; you will have the delicious music of the Anglo-American

accent throughout the evening. Ah! so the excellent Monsieur Palmer's name is Dick? I thought that Dick was the familiar diminutive of Richard! To be sure, in the matter of languages, French is the only one I can claim to know.

"As for the portrait, let us say no more about it. You are a thousand times too motherly, my dear Thérèse, to think of my interests to the detriment of your own. Although you have a fine clientèle, I know that your generosity does not permit you to save money, and that a few bank-notes will be much more suitably placed in your hands than in mine. You will employ them in making others happy, and I should toss them on a card-table, as you say.

"Moreover, I have never been less in the mood for painting. One needs for that two things which you have, reflection and inspiration; I shall never have the first, and I *have had* the second. So I am disgusted with it, as with an old witch who has exhausted me by galloping me across fields on the skinny back of her horse Apocalypse. I see clearly enough what I lack; with all respect to your good sense, I have not yet lived hard enough, and I am going away for three days or a week with Madame Reality, in the guise of divers nymphs of the *Opéra corps de ballet*. I hope, on my return, to be a most accomplished, that is to say, a most blasé and most reasonable man of the world.

"Your friend,

"LAURENT."

I

Thérèse understood perfectly, at first sight, the spleen and jealousy which dictated this letter.

"And yet," she said to herself, "he is not in love with me. Oh! no; he certainly will never be in love with any one, with me least of all."

But as she read and reread the letter and mused upon it, Thérèse feared lest she might deceive herself in seeking to convince herself that Laurent incurred no danger with her.

"But what danger?" she said to herself; "the danger of suffering for an unsatisfied caprice? Does one suffer much for a caprice? I have no idea myself. I never had one."

But the clock marked half-past five in the afternoon; and Thérèse, having put the key in her pocket, called for her hat, gave her servant leave of absence for twenty-four hours, laid several special injunctions upon her faithful old Catherine, and took a cab. Two hours later, she returned accompanied by a short, slender woman, slightly bent and closely veiled, whose face the driver did not see. She closeted herself with this mysterious individual, and Catherine served them a dainty little dinner. Thérèse waited upon and was most attentive to her guest, who gazed at her with such agitation and ecstasy that she could not eat.

Laurent, for his part, made his preparations for the projected trip to the country; but when Prince D—— called for him with his carriage, Laurent informed him that unexpected business would detain him two or three hours, and that he would join him in the country during the evening.

Laurent had no business, however. He had dressed himself in feverish haste. He had caused his hair to be arranged with special care. Then he had tossed his coat on a chair, and run his fingers through his too symmetrical curls, heedless of the effect he might thus produce. He paced the floor of his studio, now rapidly, now slowly. When Prince D—— had gone, making him promise ten times over that he would soon follow, he ran out to the stairs to ask him to wait and to say that he would throw over his business and go with him; but he did not recall him, but returned to his room, and threw himself on the bed.

“Why does she close her door to me for two days? There is something behind it! And when she makes an appointment with me for the third day, it is to make me meet an American or an Englishman whom I don’t know! But she must certainly know this Palmer whom she calls by his diminutive! In that case, why in the deuce did he ask me for her address? Is it a feint? Why should she feign with me? I am not Thérèse’s lover, I have no rights over her! Thérèse’s lover! that I certainly shall never be. God preserve me from it! A woman who is five years older than I, perhaps more! Who can tell a woman’s age, especially this woman’s, of whom nobody knows anything? So mysterious a past must cover some monumental folly, perhaps a fully-matured disgrace. And for all that, she is a prude, a devotee, or a philosopher perhaps, who knows? She talks on every subject with

such impartiality, or tolerance, or indifference—— Does any one know what she believes, what she doesn't believe, what she wants, what she loves, or even if she is capable of loving?"

Mercourt, a young critic and friend of Laurent, entered the studio.

"I know," he said, "that you are going to Montmorency. So I have simply looked in to ask you for an address, Mademoiselle Jacques's."

Laurent started.

"What the devil do you want of Mademoiselle Jacques?" he rejoined, pretending to be looking for cigarette-papers.

"I? nothing—that is to say, yes, I would like to know her; but I know her only by sight and reputation. I want her address for a person who is anxious to be painted."

"You know Mademoiselle Jacques by sight, you say?"

"*Parbleu!* she is altogether famous now, and who has not noticed her? She is made to be noticed!"

"You think so?"

"To be sure, and you?"

"I? I know nothing about it. I am very fond of her, so I am not a competent judge."

"You are very fond of her?"

"Yes, I admit it, you see; which proves that I am not paying court to her."

"Do you see her often?"

"Sometimes."

"Then you are her friend—seriously?"

"Well, yes, to some extent. Why do you laugh?"

"Because I don't believe a word of it; at twenty-four, one is not the serious friend of a—young and beautiful woman!"

"Bah! she is neither so young nor so beautiful as you say. She is a good comrade, not unpleasant to look at,

that's all. But she belongs to a type that I don't like, and I am obliged to forgive her for being a blonde. I don't like blondes, except in painting."

"She is not so very light after all! her eyes are of a soft black, her hair is neither light nor dark, and she arranges it in a peculiar way. However, it's becoming to her: she has the look of an amiable sphinx."

"A very pretty comparison; but—you like tall women, it seems!"

"She is not very tall, and she has small feet and small hands. She is a true woman. I have examined her very carefully, being in love with her."

"I say, what are you thinking about?"

"It makes no difference to you, since, viewed as a woman simply, she doesn't attract you."

"My dear fellow, if she did attract me, it would be all the same. In that case, I should try to be on a more intimate footing with her than I am; but I should not be in love with her, that being a profession which I do not practise; consequently, I should not be jealous. So press your suit, if you think best."

"I shall, if I find the opportunity; but I have no time to seek it, and, at heart, I am like you, Laurent, perfectly disposed to be patient, since I am of an age and a society in which there is no lack of pleasure. But, as we are speaking of that woman, and as you know her, tell me—it is pure curiosity on my part—whether she is a widow or——"

"Or what?"

"I meant to say whether she is the widow of a lover or a husband."

"I have no idea."

"That isn't possible."

"On my word of honor, I never asked her. It makes no difference to me!"

"Do you know what people say?"

"No, I don't care at all. What is it that people say?"

"You see that you do care! They say that she was married to a rich man with a title."

"Married——"

"Married as much as one can be, before the mayor and the priest."

"What nonsense! she would bear her husband's name and title."

"Ah! there you are! There's a mystery about her. When I have time, I propose to investigate it, and I will tell you what I learn. They say that she has no known lover, although she leads a very independent life. But of course you know how that is, don't you?"

"I don't know the first thing about it. Come, come! do you suppose I pass my life watching and questioning women? I am not an idler like you. I find life hardly long enough to live and work."

"As to living, I don't say that you are not right. You seem to live hard enough, my boy. But as to working,—they say that you don't work enough. Let us see, what have you there? Let me look!"

"No, it's nothing; I have nothing started here."

"Yes, you have: that head—that is very fine, deuce take me! Let me look, I say, or I'll give you the devil in my next *salon*."

"You are quite capable of it."

"Yes, when you deserve it; but as to that head, it is superb, and one cannot help admiring it. What is it to be?"

"Do you suppose I know?"

"Do you want me to tell you?"

"You will confer a favor on me."

"Make a sibyl of it. Then you can arrange the hair as you please, it doesn't make any difference."

"Stay! that's an idea."

"And then you don't compromise the person it resembles."

"Does it resemble any one?"

"*Parbleu!* wretched joker, do you think that I don't recognize it? Come, come, my dear fellow, you must have meant to laugh at me, since you deny everything, even the simplest things. You are the lover of that face!"

"And to prove it, I am going to Montmorency!" said Laurent, coldly, taking his hat.

"That doesn't prove anything!" replied Mercourt.

They went out together, and Mercourt saw Laurent enter a cab; but Laurent went no farther than the Bois de Boulogne, where he dined all alone at a small café, and returned at night-fall, on foot and lost in his thoughts.

The Bois de Boulogne of that time was not what it is to-day. It was smaller, more neglected, poorer, more mysterious, and more like the country; one could reflect there.

On the Champs-Élysées, less splendid and less thickly settled than to-day, were tracts of land newly thrown open to building, where one could hire at a reasonable price small houses with gardens, where perfect privacy was attainable. One could live quietly there and work.

It was in one of those neat white cottages, amid flowering lilacs, and behind a tall hedge of hawthorn with a green gate, that Thérèse lived. It was May. The weather was magnificent. How Laurent found himself, at nine o'clock, behind that hedge, in the lonely, unfinished street where no lanterns had as yet been

placed, and where nettles and weeds still flourished along the sides, he himself would have been embarrassed to explain.

The hedge was very thick, and Laurent skirted it noiselessly on all sides, but could see nothing save the golden reflection on the foliage of a light which he supposed to be placed on a small table in the garden by which he was accustomed to sit and smoke when he passed the evening with Thérèse. Was somebody smoking in the garden, or were they taking tea there, as sometimes happened? But Thérèse had informed Laurent that she expected a whole family from the provinces, and he could hear only two voices whispering mysteriously together, one of which seemed to belong to Thérèse. The other voice spoke very low; was it a man's?

Laurent listened until he had a ringing in his ears, and at last he heard, or thought he heard, Thérèse say:

"What does all this matter? I have but one love on earth, and that is you!"

"Now," said Laurent to himself, hastily leaving the narrow, deserted street, and returning to the noisy roadway of the Champs-Élysées, "now my mind is at rest. She has a lover! After all, she was under no obligation to tell me of it! But she needn't have talked to me on all occasions in a way to make me think that she did not and never intended to belong to any man. She is like all women: the longing to lie supersedes all else. What difference does it make to me? And yet I would never have believed it. Indeed, I must have been a little cracked over her without realizing it, since I went there and played the spy, the most dastardly of all trades, except when one is driven to it by jealousy! I cannot regret it very much; it saves me from great unhappiness and from a great imposition: that of desiring a woman

who has nothing that makes her desirable above other women, not even sincerity."

Laurent stopped an empty cab that was passing, and went to Montmorency. He proposed to pass a week there, and not to darken Thérèse's door for a fortnight. But he remained in the country only forty-eight hours, and arrived at Thérèse's cottage on the evening of the third day, simultaneously with Monsieur Richard Palmer.

"Ah!" said the American, offering him his hand, "I am very glad to see you!"

Laurent could not avoid taking the proffered hand; but he could not refrain from asking Monsieur Palmer why he was so glad to see him.

The foreigner paid no heed to the artist's somewhat impertinent tone.

"I am glad because I am fond of you," he replied, with irresistible cordiality, "and I am fond of you because I have a great admiration for you!"

"What! are you here?" said Thérèse, surprised to see Laurent. "I had given you up for this evening."

And it seemed to the young man that there was an unfamiliar coolness in the tone in which those simple words were spoken.

"Indeed!" he replied in an undertone, "you had become reconciled to it very readily, and I fear that I am disturbing a delightful tête-à-tête."

"That is the more cruel of you," she rejoined in the same playful tone, "because you seemed disposed to arrange it for me."

"You evidently counted upon it, as you did not cancel his appointment. Shall I go?"

"No, stay. I will resign myself to endure your presence."

The American, after saluting Thérèse, had opened his portfolio and taken from it a letter which had been given him to hand to her. Thérèse read it with an unmoved air, and made no comment whatever upon it.

"If you wish to answer," said Palmer, "I have an opportunity to forward a letter to Havana."

"Thanks," Thérèse replied, opening the drawer of a little table by her side, "I shall not answer it."

Laurent, who watched all her movements, saw that she put the letter with several others, one of which he recognized by its shape and superscription. It was the note he had written her two days before. For some reason, I know not what, it vexed him to see that letter in company with the one Monsieur Palmer had just handed her.

"She tosses me in there," he said to himself, "pell-mell with her cast-off lovers. And yet I have no claim to that honor. I have never spoken to her of love."

Thérèse began to talk about Monsieur Palmer's portrait. Laurent was deaf to their entreaties, keeping a close watch upon their every glance, upon the slightest inflection of their voices, and imagining every moment that he could detect a secret dread, on their part, of his yielding; but their persistence was so manifestly sincere, that he became calmer, and reproved himself for his suspicions. If Thérèse had relations with this stranger, living alone and perfectly independent as she did, apparently owing nothing to any one, and never seeming to pay any heed to what people might say of her, had she any need of the pretext of a portrait to receive the object of her love or her caprice as often and for as long a time as she chose?

And as soon as he felt perfectly at ease, Laurent was no longer restrained by a sense of shame from gratifying his curiosity.

"Are you an American, pray?" he asked Thérèse, who from time to time repeated in English for Monsieur Palmer's benefit the remarks that he did not clearly understand.

"An American?" replied Thérèse; "have I not told you that I have the honor of being a compatriot of yours?"

"But you speak English so well!"

"You do not know whether I speak it well or ill, as you do not understand it. But I see what is in the wind, for I know that you are an inquisitive fellow. You are wondering whether Dick Palmer and I are acquaintances of yesterday or of long standing. Well, ask him."

Palmer did not wait for a question which Laurent could not readily have made up his mind to ask. He said that this was not his first visit to France, and that he had known Thérèse when she was very young, at the house of some relations of hers. He did not say what relations. Thérèse was accustomed to say that she had never known either father or mother.

Mademoiselle Jacques's past was an impenetrable mystery to the people of fashion who went to her to have their portraits painted, and to the small number of artists whom she received in private. She had come to Paris, whence no one knew, when no one knew, with whom no one knew. She had been known two or three years only, a portrait she had painted having attracted the attention of connoisseurs and been suddenly lauded as the work of a master. Thus, from the patronage of the humble and an unknown existence, she had passed without transition to a reputation of the first rank and to the enjoyment of an ample income; but she had changed not a whit in her simple tastes, her love of independence, and the playful austerity of her manners. She never posed,

and never spoke of herself except to declare her sentiments and opinions with much frankness and courage. As for the facts of her life, she had a way of evading questions and going off in another direction which saved her the necessity of replying. If any one chose to insist, she was accustomed to say, after some vague words:

"We are not talking about me. I have nothing interesting to tell, and if I have had sorrows, I have forgotten all about them, as I have no time to think of them. I am very happy now, for I have plenty of work, and I love work above everything."

It was by pure chance, and as a result of being thrown together in an assemblage of artists, that Laurent had made Mademoiselle Jacques's acquaintance. Having been launched as a gentleman and an eminent artist in two different social circles, Monsieur Fauvel possessed, at twenty-four, an amount of experience which all men have not acquired at forty. He prided himself upon it, and mourned over it by turns: but he had no experience in matters of the heart, for that is not acquired in a life of dissipation. Thanks to the scepticism which he affected, he had begun by passing judgment in his own mind that all those whom Thérèse treated as friends must be lovers, and not until he had heard them affirm and demonstrate the purity of their relations with her, did he reach the point of looking upon her as a young woman who might have had passions, but not vulgar intrigues.

Thereupon, he had become intensely curious to ascertain the cause of the anomaly: a young, intelligent, and lovely woman, absolutely free and living alone of her own free will. He had begun to see her more frequently, and of late almost every day; at first on all sorts of pretexts, latterly representing himself as a friend of no consequence, too fond of pleasure to care to talk with a serious-minded

woman, but too idealistic, after all, not to feel the craving for affection and the value of disinterested friendship.

In theory that was quite true; but love had stolen into the young man's heart, and we have seen that Laurent was struggling against the invasion of a sentiment which he still desired to disguise from Thérèse and from himself, especially as he felt it for the first time in his life.

"But, after all," he said, when he had promised Monsieur Palmer to undertake his portrait, "why in the devil are you so bent on having a thing that may not be good, when you know Mademoiselle Jacques, who certainly will not refuse to paint a portrait of you that is sure to be excellent?"

"She does refuse," replied Palmer, with much candor, "and I don't know why. I promised my mother, who is weak enough to think me very handsome, a portrait by a master, and she won't consider it a good likeness if it is too true to life. That is why I have applied to you as being an idealist. If you refuse me, I shall have either the grief of not gratifying my mother, or the bother of looking farther."

"That will not take long; there are so many people more capable than I am!"

"I do not think it; but, assuming it to be true, it doesn't follow that they will have the time at once, and I am in a hurry to send the portrait away. It should arrive for my birthday, four months hence, and the transportation will take about two months."

"That is to say, Laurent," added Thérèse, "that you must finish the portrait in six weeks at the outside; and as I know how much time you will need, you must begin to-morrow. Come, it is understood, you promise, don't you?"

Monsieur Palmer held out his hand to Laurent, saying: "The bargain is made. I say nothing about money; Mademoiselle Jacques is to arrange the terms, I shall not interfere. At what hour to-morrow?"

The hour being fixed, Palmer took his hat, and Laurent felt bound to do the same out of respect to Thérèse; but Palmer paid no heed to him and took his leave, after pressing Mademoiselle Jacques's hand without kissing it.

"Shall I go, too?" said Laurent.

"It isn't necessary," she replied; "everybody whom I receive in the evening, knows me well. But you must go at ten o'clock to-night; for several times lately I have forgotten myself so far as to chatter with you till nearly midnight, and as I can't sleep after five in the morning, I have felt very tired."

"And yet you didn't turn me out!"

"No, it didn't occur to me."

"If I were a conceited donkey, I should be very proud of that!"

"But you are not conceited, thank God! you leave that to the fools. But, despite the compliment, Master Laurent, I have a bone to pick with you. They say you are not working."

"And it was for the purpose of forcing me to work that you held Palmer's head at my throat like a pistol?"

"Well, why not?"

"You are kind, Thérèse, I know; you mean to make me earn my living in spite of myself."

"I don't interfere with your means of existence, I have no right to do it. I have not the good or ill fortune to be your mother; but I am your sister,—*in Apollo*, as our classic Bernard says,—and it is impossible for me not to be grieved by your spasms of indolence."

"But what difference can it make to you?" cried Laurent, with a mingling of irritation and pleasure which Thérèse felt, and which impelled her to reply frankly.

"Listen, my dear Laurent," she said, "we must have an understanding. I have a very great friendship for you."

"I am very proud of it, but I do not know why! Indeed, I am of no use as a friend, Thérèse. I have no more belief in friendship than in love between a man and woman."

"You have told me that before, and it makes no difference to me what you do or do not believe. For my own part, I believe in what I feel, and I feel both interest and affection for you. I am like that: I cannot endure to have any person whatsoever about me without becoming attached to him and wishing that he might be happy. I am accustomed to do my utmost in that direction, without caring whether the person in question is grateful to me or not. Now you are not any person whatsoever, you are a man of genius, and, what is more, a man of heart, I trust."

"I, a man of heart? Yes, if you use the term in the ordinary worldly meaning. I know how to fight a duel, pay my debts, and defend the woman to whom I offer my arm, whoever she may be. But if you consider me tender-hearted, loving, artless——"

"I know that you affect to be old, blasé and corrupt. But your affectation produces no effect on me. It is a very popular fashion at the present time. In your case, it is a disease, genuine it may be and painful, but it will pass away when you choose. You are a man of heart, for the very reason that you suffer because of the emptiness of your heart; a woman will come along who will fill it, if she knows how to go about it and if you will let her."

But this is outside of my subject; I am speaking to the artist; the man in you is unhappy, only because the artist is not satisfied with himself."

"Ah! you are wrong, Thérèse," rejoined Laurent earnestly. "The opposite of what you say is true: it is the man who suffers in the artist and stifles him. I do not know what to do with myself, you see. Ennui is killing me. Ennui because of what? you will ask. Because of everything! I cannot, like you, be tranquil and attentive during six hours of work, take a turn in the garden and toss bread to the sparrows, then go back to work again for four hours, and in the evening smile on two or three tiresome creatures, like myself for example, until it is time to go to sleep. My sleep is broken, my work is feverish, my walks are agitated. Invention bewilders me and makes me tremble; execution, always too slow to suit me, makes my heart beat violently, and I weep and have to exert myself not to shriek when I give birth to an idea which intoxicates me, but which I am mortally ashamed of and disgusted with the next morning. If I change it, it is worse, for it leaves me; it is much better to forget it and wait for another; but that arrives in such confusion and of such enormous proportions, that my poor frame cannot hold it. It weighs upon me and tortures me until it has assumed measurable proportions and the other pain returns, the pain of childbirth, a real physical suffering which I cannot describe. And that is how my life goes when I allow myself to be vanquished by this giant of an artist who is within me, and from whom the poor devil who is speaking to you removes one by one, by the forceps of his will, meagre, half-dead mice! So it is much better, Thérèse, that I should live as I have chosen to live, that I should commit excesses of all sorts, and kill this gnawing worm which my fellows modestly call

their inspiration, but which I call my infirmity, pure and simple."

"It is decided then," said Thérèse, smiling; "the die is cast, and you are trying to drive your intelligence to suicide? Well, I do not believe a word of it. If some one should propose to you to-morrow to change places with Prince D—— or Comte de S——, with the millions of the first and the fine horses of the other, you would say, referring to your poor despised palette: *Give me back my love!*"

"My despised palette? You do not understand me, Thérèse! It is an instrument of glory, I know that perfectly well; and what people call glory is the esteem accorded to talent, purer and more delicious than that accorded to titles and wealth. Therefore it is a very great privilege and a very great pleasure for me to say to myself: 'I am only a poor, penniless gentleman, and my equals, who do not derogate from their station, lead the lives of gamekeepers and foregather with gleaners of dead wood, whom they pay in fire-wood. But I have derogated, I have adopted a profession, and the result is that when I, at twenty-four years of age, ride a hired horse among the richest and noblest of Paris, mounted on horses worth ten thousand francs, if there happens to be a man of taste or a woman of intelligence among the idlers seated along the Champs-Élysées, I am stared at and pointed out, and not the others——' You laugh! do you think me very vain?"

"No, but very like a child, thank God! You won't kill yourself."

"Why, I have not the slightest inclination to kill myself. I love myself as much as other men love themselves; indeed, I love myself with all my heart, I swear! But I say that my palette, the instrument of my glory,

is the instrument of my torture, since I cannot work without suffering. Thereupon I seek in dissipation, not death of body or mind, but to fatigue and tranquillize my nerves. This is the whole of it, Thérèse. What is there in that that is not reasonable? I cannot work decently except when I am ready to drop with fatigue."

"That is true," said Thérèse, "I have noticed it, and I wonder at it as an anomaly; but I am very much afraid that that method of working will kill you; indeed, I cannot imagine how it can be otherwise. Stay, answer one question: did you begin life by hard work and abstinence, and did you feel the necessity of seeking distraction for the sake of rest?"

"No; just the opposite. When I left school, I was very fond of painting, but did not expect that I should ever be compelled to paint. I believed that I was rich. My father died leaving only about thirty thousand francs, which I made haste to devour, in order to have at least one year of luxury in my life. When I found that I was stranded, I took to the brush; I have been pulled to pieces, and lauded to the clouds, which, in our day, constitutes the greatest possible success, and now I lead a life of luxury and pleasure from time to time, for a few months or a few weeks, so long as the money lasts. When it is all gone, I have no fault to find, for I am always at the end of my strength and my desires alike. Thereupon I go back to my work, frantically, with mingled sorrow and ecstasy, and when the work is finished, idleness and extravagance begin again."

"Have you been leading this life long?"

"Nothing can be long at my age! About three years."

"Ah! but that is long for your age, I tell you! And then you began badly; you set fire to your vital spirits before they had taken their flight; you drank vinegar to

stunt your growth. Your head continued to grow none the less, and genius developed in it in spite of everything; but perhaps your heart has atrophied, perhaps you will never be complete either as man or as artist."

These words, spoken with tranquil melancholy, irritated Laurent.

"So you despise me, do you?" he said, rising.

"No," she replied, holding out her hand, "I pity you!"

And he saw two great tears roll slowly down her cheeks.

Those tears produced a violent reaction in him; his own face was bathed in tears as he threw himself at Thérèse's feet, not like a lover declaring his passion, but like a child making his confession.

"Ah! my poor dear friend!" he cried, taking her hands, "you are quite right to pity me, for I need it! I am unhappy, so unhappy that I am ashamed to tell you! This indescribable something that I have in my breast in place of a heart is crying incessantly for I know not what, nor do I know what to give it to appease it. I love God, and I do not believe in Him. I love all women, and I despise them all! I can say this to you, who are my comrade and my friend! I surprise myself sometimes on the point of idolizing a courtesan, whereas beside an angel I should probably be colder than a marble statue. Everything is turned topsy-turvy in my notions; it may be that everything has gone wrong in my instincts. Suppose I should tell you that the time has already passed when I can find cheerful ideas in wine! Yes, I am depressed when I am drunk, it seems, and they told me that the day before yesterday, in that debauch at Montmorency, I declaimed tragic things with a vehemence as ghastly as it was absurd. What do you suppose will become of me, Thérèse, if you do not have pity for me?"

"To be sure, I have pity for you, my poor child," said Thérèse, wiping his eyes with her handkerchief; "but what good can that do you?"

"Ah! but if you should love me, Thérèse! Do not take your hands away! Have you not given me leave to be a sort of friend to you?"

"I have told you that I was fond of you; you replied that you could not believe in a woman's friendship."

"I might, perhaps, believe in yours; you must have a man's heart, since you have a man's strength and talent. Give it to me."

"I have not taken yours, and I propose to try to be a man for you," she replied; "but I don't quite know how to go about it. A man's friendship should be more outspoken and authoritative than I feel capable of being. In spite of myself, I shall pity you more than I shall scold you, as you see already! I had made up my mind to humiliate you to-day, to make you angry with me and yourself; instead of which, here I am weeping with you, and that doesn't advance matters at all."

"Yes, it does! yes, it does!" cried Laurent. "These tears do me good, they have watered the parched place; perhaps my heart will grow again there! Ah! Thérèse, you told me once, when I boasted before you of things that I should have blushed for, that I was a prison-wall. You forgot only one thing: that there is a prisoner behind that wall! If I could open the door, you would see him; but the door is closed, the wall is of bronze, and not my will, nor my faith, nor my affection, nor even my voice can penetrate it. Must I then live and die thus? What will it avail me, I ask you, to have daubed the walls of my dungeon with a few fanciful pictures, if the word *love* is written nowhere there?"

"If I understand you," said Thérèse dreamily, "you

think that your work needs to be enlivened by sentiment."

"Do not you think so, too? Is not that what all your reproaches say?"

"Not precisely. There is only too much fire in your execution; the critics blame you for it. For my part, I have always felt deep respect for that youthful exuberance which makes great artists, and the beauties of which prevent any one who has true enthusiasm from harping upon its defects. Far from considering your work cold and positive, it seems to me burning and impassioned; but I have tried to make out where the seat of that passion was; I see now: it is in the craving of the heart. Yes," she added, still musing, as if she were seeking to pierce the veil of her own thought, "desire certainly may be a passion."

"Well, what are you thinking about?" said Laurent, following her absorbed glance.

"I am wondering if I ought to declare war on this power that is in you, and if, by persuading you to be happy and tranquil, I should not quench the sacred fire. And yet—I fancy that aspiration cannot be a durable condition of the mind, and that, when it has been earnestly expressed during its feverish stage, it must either subside of itself or overpower us. What do you say? Has not each age its special force and manifestation? Are not what we call the different *manners* of a master, simply the expression of the successive transformations of his being? At thirty, will it be possible for you to have aspired to everything without attaining anything? Will you not be compelled to adopt some fixed theory touching some point or other? You are at the age of caprice; but soon will come the age of light. Do you not wish to make progress?"

"Does it depend upon me to do it?"

"Yes, if you do not attempt to disturb the equilibrium of your faculties. You cannot persuade me that exhaustion is the proper remedy for fever: it is simply its fatal result."

"What febrifuge do you suggest, then?"

"I don't know; marriage, perhaps."

"Horror!" cried Laurent, bursting with laughter.

And he added, still laughing, and without any very clear idea of the source of that corrective:

"Unless I marry you, Thérèse. Ah! that is an idea, on my word!"

"Charming," she rejoined, "but altogether impossible."

This reply impressed Laurent by its conclusive tranquillity, and what he had just said by way of jest suddenly assumed the guise of a buried dream, as if the operation had taken place in his mind. That powerful and ill-fated mind was so constituted that the word *impossible* was all that was necessary to make him desire a thing, and that was just the word Thérèse had uttered.

Instantly his inclination to fall in love with her reawoke, and with it his suspicions, his jealousy, and his anger. Hitherto the spell of friendship had lulled and, as it were, intoxicated him; of a sudden he became bitter, and cold as ice.

"Ah! yes, of course," he said, taking his hat to go, "that is the key-word of my life, which constantly turns up on every occasion, at the end of a jest, as well as at the end of every serious subject: *impossible!* You do not know that foe, Thérèse; your love is tranquil and undisturbed. You have a *lover*, or a *friend*, who is not jealous, because he knows you to be cold or reasonable! That reminds me that it is getting late, and that your *thirty-seven cousins* are probably here, waiting for me to go."

"What is that you are saying?" demanded Thérèse in utter amazement; "what ideas have come into your head? Are you subject to attacks of insanity?"

"Sometimes," he added, taking his leave. "You must excuse them."

II

The next day, Thérèse received the following letter from Laurent:

"MY DEAR GOOD FRIEND:

"How did I leave you last night? If I said some horrible thing to you, forget it, I had no consciousness of it. I had an attack of vertigo which did not leave me at your door; for I found myself at my own door, in a cab, with no idea how I got there.

"It often happens with me, my dear friend, that my mouth says one thing when my brain is saying another. Pity me and forgive me. I am ill, and you were right in saying that the life I lead is detestable.

"By what right do I put questions to you? Do me the justice to admit that this is the first time I have ever questioned you, in the three months that I have known you intimately. What does it matter to me whether you are engaged, married, or a widow? You do not choose that anybody shall know, and have I tried to find out? Have I asked you? Ah! Thérèse, my head is still in confusion this morning, and yet I feel that I am lying, and I do not intend to lie to you. Friday evening I had my first attack of curiosity with regard to you, and yesterday's was the second; but it shall be the last, I swear,

and to have done with the subject once and for all, I propose to make a clean breast of everything. I was at your door the other evening, that is to say, at your garden gate. I looked, and saw nothing; I listened and I heard! Even so, what does it matter to you? I do not know his name, I did not see his face; but I know that you are my sister, my consolation, my confidante, my mainstay. I know that I wept at your feet last night, and that you wiped my eyes with your handkerchief, and said: 'What are we to do, what are we to do, my poor boy?' I know that you, wise, hard-working, placid, respected creature that you are, since you are free and beloved, since you are happy, find time and charity to remember that I exist, to pity me, and to try to make my life better. Dear Thérèse, the man who would not bless you would be an ingrate, and, although I am a miserable wretch, I do not know ingratitude. When will you receive me, Thérèse? It seems to me that I insulted you? That only was lacking! Shall I come to you this evening? If you say no, on my word, I shall go to the devil!"

Laurent's servant brought back Thérèse's reply. It was very short: *Come this evening*. Laurent was neither a *roué* nor a puppy, although he often thought of being, or was tempted to be, one or the other. He was, as we have seen, a creature full of contrasts, whom we describe without trying to explain, for that would not be possible; certain characters elude logical analysis.

Thérèse's reply made him tremble like a child. She had never written him in that tone. Was it meant as a command to him to come to receive his dismissal upon stated grounds? or was she summoning him to a love-meeting? Had those three words, cold or ardent as it happened, been dictated by indignation or by passion?

Monsieur Palmer arrived, and Laurent, agitated and preoccupied as he was, must needs begin his portrait. He had made up his mind to question him with consummate art, and to extort all Thérèse's secrets from him. He could devise no way of broaching the subject, and as the American posed conscientiously, as motionless and dumb as a statue, hardly a word was spoken on either side during the sitting.

Laurent succeeded, therefore, in calming himself sufficiently to study the American's regular, placid features. His beauty was without a blemish, a fact that imparted to his face at first sight the inanimate air peculiar to absolutely regular faces. But, on examining him more closely, you could detect a certain shrewdness in his smile and fire in his glance. At the same time that Laurent made these observations, he was trying to determine his model's age.

"I beg your pardon," he said abruptly, "but it would be well for me to know whether you are a young man somewhat overworked, or a middle-aged man wonderfully well preserved. It is of no use for me to look at you, I do not understand what I see."

"I am forty years old," replied Monsieur Palmer simply.

"God save us!" exclaimed Laurent; "then you must enjoy robust health?"

"Excellent!" said Palmer.

And he resumed his graceful pose and his tranquil smile.

"It's the face of a happy lover," said the artist to himself, "or else of a man who has never cared for anything but roast beef."

He could not resist the temptation to ask:

"So you knew Mademoiselle Jacques when she was very young?"

"She was fifteen years old when I first saw her."

Laurent had not the courage to ask him in what year that was. It seemed to him that the blood rushed to his face when he mentioned Thérèse. What did her age matter to him? It was her story that he would have liked to hear. Thérèse did not appear thirty; Palmer might have been no more than her friend. And then his voice was loud and penetrating. If it had been he to whom Thérèse had said: *I love no one but you*, he would have made some sort of a reply that Laurent would have heard.

At last, the evening came, and the artist, who was not in the habit of being punctual, arrived before the time at which Thérèse usually received him. He found her in her garden, unoccupied, contrary to her custom, and walking back and forth in evident agitation. As soon as she spied him, she went to meet him, and said, taking his hand with an air of authority rather than affection:

"If you are a man of honor, you will tell me all that you heard through this shrubbery. Come, speak; I am listening."

She sat down on a bench, and Laurent, irritated by this unusual reception, tried to worry her by making evasive replies; but she cowed him by her manifest displeasure, and by an expression of the face which was entirely strange to him. The dread of a definitive rupture with her led him to tell her the simple truth.

"So that was all you heard?" she said. "I said to a person whom you did not even see: 'You are now my only love on earth?'"

"Did I dream it, Thérèse? I am ready to believe it, if you bid me."

"No, you did not dream it. I may have said it, nay, I probably did say it. And what was the answer?"

"None that I heard," replied Laurent, upon whom Thérèse's admission had the effect of a cold shower-bath;

"I didn't even hear the sound of his voice. Is your mind at rest?"

"No, I have other questions to ask you. To whom do you suppose that I said that?"

"I suppose nothing. I know no one but Monsieur Palmer, with whom the nature of your relations is not known."

"Ah!" cried Thérèse, with a strange air of satisfaction, "so you think it was Monsieur Palmer?"

"Why should it not be he? Do I insult you by supposing the possibility of an old liaison recently renewed? I know that your relations with all those whom I have seen here for the past three months are as disinterested on their part and as indifferent on yours as my own relations with you. Monsieur Palmer is very handsome, and he has the manners of a gallant man. I like him very much. I have neither the right nor the presumption to examine you touching your private sentiments. But—you will say that I have been watching you."

"I shall, indeed," rejoined Thérèse, who did not seem to think of denying anything whatsoever; "why do you watch me? It seems to me a wretched thing to do, although I don't understand it at all. Tell me how you came to do it."

"Thérèse!" replied the young man eagerly, determined to rid himself of all that he had on his mind, "tell me that you have a lover, and that Palmer is the man, and I will love you truly, I will talk to you with absolute frankness. I will ask your pardon for an outbreak of madness, and you shall never have any reason to reproach me. Come, do you wish me to be your friend? Despite all my boasting, I feel that I need your friendship and that I am capable of being your friend. Be frank with me, that is all that I ask of you!"

"My dear fellow," Thérèse replied, "you talk to me as if I were a coquette who was trying to keep you by her side, and who had some confession to make. I cannot accept that situation; it is in no respect suited to me. Monsieur Palmer is not and never will be to me anything more than a highly valued friend, with whom I am not even on intimate terms, and whom I had lost sight of for a long time until recently. So much I may say to you, but nothing more. My secrets, if I have any, do not require a confidant, and I beg you to take no more interest in them than I desire you to do. It is not for you to question me, therefore, but to answer my questions. What were you doing here four days ago? Why were you watching me? What is the *outbreak of madness* which I am to know about and pass judgment upon?"

"The tone in which you speak to me is not encouraging. Why should I confess, when you no longer deign to treat me as a comrade and to have confidence in me?"

"Do not confess then," said Thérèse, rising. "That will prove to me that you did not deserve the esteem I felt for you, and that you did not reciprocate it in the least, since you tried to find out my secrets."

"So you turn me out," said Laurent, "and it is all over between us?"

"It is all over, adieu!" replied Thérèse in a severe tone.

Laurent left the house in a rage which made it impossible for him to say a word; but he had not taken thirty steps in the street, when he returned, telling Catherine that he had forgotten to deliver a message which somebody had given him for her mistress. He found Thérèse sitting in a small salon; the garden door was still open; she seemed to have gone so far, and to have paused there, grieved and downcast, absorbed in her reflections. She received him frigidly.

"So you have come back?" she said; "what is it that you forgot?"

"I forgot to tell you the truth."

"I no longer care to hear it."

"But you asked me for it?"

"I thought that you might tell it spontaneously."

"And I might have, I should have; I was wrong not to do it. Look you, Thérèse, do you think it possible for a man of my age to see you without falling in love with you?"

"In love?" said Thérèse, with a frown. "So you were making sport of me, were you, when you told me that you could not fall in love with any woman?"

"No, indeed; I said what I thought."

"Then you were mistaken, and you are really in love! are you quite sure of it?"

"Oh! don't be angry; great Heaven! I am not sure enough for that. Thoughts of love have passed through my head, through my senses, if you choose. Have you so little experience that you considered it impossible?"

"I am old enough to have had experience," she replied; "but I have lived alone for a long while. I have had no experience of certain situations. Does that surprise you? It is true, none the less. I am very simple-minded, although I have been deceived, like everybody else! You have told me a hundred times that you respected me too much to look upon me as a woman, for the reason that your love for women was altogether gross. So I believed that I was in no danger from the outrage of your desires; and of all that I esteemed in you, your sincerity upon that point was what I esteemed most highly. I allowed myself to become interested in your destiny with the greater freedom, because, you remember, we said to each other, laughing, but with serious meaning: 'Between two

persons, of whom one is an idealist and the other a materialist, there is the Baltic Sea.' "

"I said it in all sincerity, and I walked confidently along the shore on my side, without an idea of crossing; but it happened that the ice would not bear. Is it my fault that I am twenty-four, and that you are beautiful?"

"Am I still beautiful? I hoped not."

"I cannot say; I did not think so at first, and then, one fine day, you seemed beautiful to me. So far as you are concerned, it is involuntary, I know that perfectly well; but it was involuntary on my part, too, my feeling this fascination, so involuntary that I fought against it and tried to divert my mind from it. I rendered unto Satan what belongs to Satan, that is to say, my poor soul, and I brought here unto Cæsar only what belongs to Cæsar,—my respect and my silence. But for eight or ten days this accursed emotion has reappeared in my dreams. It vanishes as soon as I am with you. On my word of honor, Thérèse, when I see you, when you speak to me, I am calm, I no longer remember that I cried out for you in a moment of frenzy, which I cannot understand myself. When I speak of you, I say that you are not young, or that I don't like the color of your hair. I declare that you are my comrade, that is to say, my brother, and I feel when I say it that I am perfectly loyal. And then a few puffs of spring surprise the winter in my idiotic heart, and I fancy that it is you who blow them. And it is you, in truth, Thérèse, with your adoration of what you call real love! That sets me thinking, whatever kind of love one may have!"

"I think that you are mistaken, I never speak of love."

"No, I know it. You follow a rigid rule in that respect. You have read somewhere that even to speak of love was to give it or take it; but your silence is most eloquent,

your reticence gives one the fever, and your excessive prudence has a diabolical fascination."

"In that case, let us meet no more," said Thérèse.

"Why not? what is it to you that I have had a few sleepless nights, since it depends solely upon you to make me as tranquil as I used to be."

"What must I do to bring that about?"

"What I told you: tell me that you belong to some one. I shall look upon that as final, and as I am very proud, I shall be cured as by a fairy's wand."

"And suppose I tell you that I belong to no one, because I no longer care to love any one, will not that suffice?"

"No; I shall be conceited enough to think that you may change your mind."

Thérèse could not help laughing at the adroitness with which Laurent manœuvred.

"Very well," said she, "be cured, and give me back a friendship of which I was proud, instead of a life for which I should have to blush. I love some one."

"That is not enough, Thérèse: you must tell me that you belong to him."

"Otherwise you would think that that some one was yourself, eh? Well, so be it, I have a lover. Are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly. As you see, I kiss your hand to thank you for your frankness. Come, be a good girl, tell me that it is Palmer."

"I cannot do that: it would be false."

"Then—I don't know what to think!"

"It is no one whom you know; it is a person who is absent from Paris."

"But who comes sometimes?"

"Apparently, since you overheard an outpouring of sentiment."

"Thanks, thanks, Thérèse. Now I am fairly on my feet again; I know who you are and who I am, and, if I must tell you the whole truth, I believe that I love you better so, for you are a woman now, and not a sphinx. Ah! why didn't you speak sooner?"

"Has this passion made such terrible ravages?" said Thérèse, mockingly.

"Why, yes, perhaps! Ten years hence I will tell you about it, Thérèse, and we will laugh together over it."

"Agreed; good-night."

Laurent went to bed in a very tranquil frame of mind and altogether undeceived. He had really suffered on Thérèse's account. He had passionately desired her, but had never dared to let her suspect it. Certainly it was not a meritorious passion. There was as much vanity as curiosity in it. That woman of whom all her friends said: "Whom does she love? I wish it were I, but it is no one," had appeared to him in the guise of a beautiful ideal to be grasped. His imagination had taken fire, his pride had bled with the dread, the almost certainty, of failure.

But this young man was not exclusively given over to pride. He had at times a dazzling and dominating vision of the right, the good, and the true.

He was an angel, gone astray and diseased, if not absolutely fallen like so many others. The craving for love devoured his heart, and a hundred times a day he asked himself in dismay if he had not abused life too much already, and if he still had strength to be happy.

He awoke calm and depressed. He already regretted his chimera, his beautiful sphinx, who read his thoughts with good-natured attention, who admired him, scolded him, pitied him, and encouraged him by turns, without ever revealing a corner of her own destiny, but affording a foretaste of treasures of affection, devotion, perhaps of

sensual pleasure! At all events, it was in this way that it pleased Laurent to interpret Thérèse's silence touching herself, and a certain smile, as mysterious as Joconda's, which played about her lips and in the corner of her eye, when he blasphemed in her presence. At such times, she seemed to say to herself: "I could, if I chose, describe the paradise in contrast with that villainous hell; but the poor fool would not understand me."

When the mystery of her heart was once unveiled, Thérèse lost her prestige in Laurent's eyes at first. She was no longer anything more than a woman like other women. He was even tempted to degrade her in her own esteem, and, although she had never allowed him to question her, to accuse her of hypocrisy and prudery. But, from the moment that he knew that she belonged to some one, he ceased to regret that he had respected her, and he no longer desired anything of her, not even her friendship, which, he thought, he would have no difficulty in supplying elsewhere.

This state of affairs lasted two or three days, during which Laurent prepared several explanations, in the event that Thérèse should ask him, to account for the time that had passed without his calling upon her. On the fourth day, Laurent found himself in the clutches of a savage attack of *spleen*. Harlots and courtesans made him ill; he found in none of his friends the patient and delicate kindness with which Thérèse would detect his ennui, try to divert his mind, help him to seek its cause and remedy, in a word, give her whole mind to him. She alone knew what ought to be said to him, and seemed to understand that the fate of an artist like him was not a matter of trifling importance, as to which a more exalted mind had the right to declare that, if he were unfortunate, it was so much the worse for him.

He ran to her house in such hot haste, that he forgot what he intended to say by way of apology; but Thérèse showed neither displeasure nor surprise because of his neglect, and spared him the necessity of lying by asking him no questions. He was stung by her indifference, and discovered that he was more jealous of her than before.

"She has probably seen her lover," he thought; "she has forgotten me."

However, he did not manifest his irritation, and kept such close watch upon himself thereafter, that Thérèse was deceived.

Several weeks passed in alternations of frenzy, coldness, and affection. Nothing else on earth was so necessary to him and so beneficent as that woman's friendship, nothing so bitter and so galling as to be unable to seek her love. The confession he had demanded, far from curing him as he had flattered himself that it would, had intensified his suffering. It was jealousy, which he could no longer conceal from himself, since it had a definite and admitted cause. How, in Heaven's name, could he ever have fancied that as soon as he knew that cause, he would scorn the idea of striving to destroy it?

And yet he made no effort to supplant the invisible and happy rival. His pride, which was excessive when he was with Thérèse, would not allow him to do it. When he was alone, he hated him, decried him to himself, attributing all sorts of absurdities to that phantom, insulting him and challenging him ten times a day.

Then he would become disgusted with suffering, seek comfort in debauchery, forget himself for a moment, but instantly relapse into profound depression, and go to pass an hour or two with Thérèse, overjoyed to see her, to breathe the air that she breathed, and to contradict her

in order to have the pleasure of listening to her voice, scolding and caressing by turns.

Finally he detested her for not divining his torments; he despised her for remaining faithful to that lover of hers, who could not be a man of more than ordinary talent, since she did not feel the need of talking about him; he would leave her, swearing that he would not go near her again for a long while, and he would have returned an hour later if he had had any hope that she would receive him.

Thérèse, who had caught a glimpse of his love for a moment, no longer suspected it, so well did he play his part. She was sincerely attached to the unhappy youth. Being an enthusiastic artist beneath her calm and thoughtful exterior, she had set up a sort of altar, she said, *to what he might have been*, and she still felt for him an indulgent pity, blended with genuine respect for genius diseased and gone astray. If she had been very certain of not arousing any evil desire, she would have fondled him like a son, and there were times when she checked herself as she was on the point of using the familiar form of address to him.

Was there a touch of love in that maternal sentiment? There surely was, unknown to Thérèse; but a truly chaste woman, who has lived longer by work than by passion, can keep from herself for a long while the secret of a love which she has resolved to fight against. Thérèse believed that she was certain of having no thought of her own satisfaction in that attachment of which she bore all the burden; as soon as it was evident that Laurent found tranquillity and contentment with her, she found tranquillity and contentment to give him. She was well aware that he was incapable of loving as she understood the word; so that she had been hurt and

alarmed at the momentary caprice which he had confessed. That paroxysm past, she congratulated herself upon having found in a harmless fib a means of preventing its recurrence; and, as on all occasions, whenever he felt at all excited, Laurent hastened to proclaim the impassable barrier of ice *of the Baltic Sea*, she was no longer afraid, and accustomed herself to live amid flames without being burned.

All these sufferings and perils of the two friends were concealed and, as it were, incubated beneath a habitual satirical gaiety, which is the natural mood, the indelible seal, as it were, of French artists. It is a sort of second nature, for which the people of more northern countries blame us severely, and for which the serious English, above all, look down upon us. Yet it is that which constitutes the charm of refined liaisons, and often preserves us from many a mad or foolish step. To seek the absurd side of things is to discover the weak and illogical side. To laugh at the perils by which the heart is encompassed, is to practise defying them, like our soldiers, who go into fire laughing and singing. To make fun of a friend is often to save him from some weakness in which our pity would have led him to gratify himself. And, finally, to make fun of one's self is to rescue one's self from the foolish intoxication of overweening self-esteem. I have noticed that people who never jest are generally endowed with puerile and intolerable vanity.

Laurent's gaiety, like his talent, was dazzling with color and wit, and was the more natural because it was original. Thérèse had less wit than he, in the sense that she was naturally given to musing, and was an indolent talker; but what she needed was a playful spirit in others; then her own would gradually wake, and her quiet merriment was not without charm.

The result of this habitual good humor was that love, a subject upon which Thérèse never jested and did not like to have others jest in her presence, found no opportunity to slip in a word, to utter a note.

One fine morning, Monsieur Palmer's portrait was finished, and Thérèse handed to Laurent, in her friend's name, a snug little sum which the young man promised to put aside, to be used in case of illness or of some unforeseen and unavoidable expense.

Laurent had become intimate with Palmer while painting his portrait. He had found him what he was: upright, just, generous, intelligent, and well-informed. Palmer was a wealthy American of the middle class, whose patrimonial fortune was derived from trade. He had been in business himself and had travelled extensively in his younger days. At thirty, he had had the excellent sense to consider himself rich enough, and to determine to live for his own enjoyment. So he no longer travelled except for pleasure, and after he had seen, as he said, many curious things and extraordinary countries, he took delight in the sight of beautiful things and in studying countries which were really interesting by reason of their civilization.

Although he was not a very enlightened student of art, his judgment was reasonably reliable, and on all subjects his ideas were as healthy as his instincts. His French showed the effect of his timidity, to such a degree that it was almost unintelligible and absurdly incorrect at the beginning of a conversation; but when he felt at ease, one could see that he knew the language, and that all he lacked was longer practice or greater confidence to speak it very well.

Laurent had studied him with much curiosity and perturbation at the outset. When it was proved by affirmative evidence that he was not Mademoiselle Jacques's lover, he

estimated his character more fairly, and conceived a sort of friendship for him which resembled, albeit at a long distance, his sentiment for Thérèse. Palmer was a tolerant philosopher, strict enough in his dealings with himself and very charitable to others. In his ideas, if not in his character, he resembled Thérèse, and he was almost always in accord with her on all points. Now and then Laurent still felt jealous of what he called, in musical parlance, their imperturbable *unison*; and, as it was simply an intellectual jealousy, he ventured to complain of it to Thérèse.

"Your definition amounts to nothing," she said. "Palmer is too placid and too perfect for me. I have a little more fire, and I sing a little louder than he does. Compared with him, I am the high note in the major third."

"In that case, I am only a false note," said Laurent.

"No," said Thérèse, "with you I am modified and go down the scale to form the minor third."

"Then with me you descend half a tone?"

"And I am half an interval nearer to you than to Palmer."

III

One day, at Palmer's request, Laurent went to the Hôtel Meurice, where the American lived, to see that the portrait was suitably framed and packed. The lid was nailed on in their presence, and Palmer himself wrote his mother's name and address thereon with a brush; then, as the porters carried the box away to dispatch it on its long journey, Palmer grasped the artist's hand, and said:

"I owe it to you that my dear mother is soon to have a very great pleasure, and I thank you again. Now will

you allow me to talk with you a few moments? I have something to say to you."

They went into a salon where Laurent saw several trunks.

"I start to-morrow for Italy," said the American, offering him some excellent cigars and a taper, although he did not smoke himself; "and I do not choose to part with you without a few words touching a delicate matter, so delicate that, if you interrupt me, I shall not be able to find the proper French words for what I want to say."

"I swear that I will be as mute as the tomb," said Laurent, with a smile, surprised and considerably disturbed by this preamble.

"You love Mademoiselle Jacques," continued Palmer, "and I think that she loves you. Perhaps you are her lover; if you are not, I feel certain that you will be sooner or later. Ah! you promised not to speak! Say nothing, for I ask you nothing. I consider you worthy of the honor I attribute to you; but I am afraid that you are not well enough acquainted with Thérèse to know that, if your love is an honor to her, hers is no less an honor to you. I am afraid of that because of the questions you asked me about her, and of certain remarks that have been made about her before us two, by which I saw that you were more moved than I was. That proves that you know nothing about her; now I, who know the whole story, propose to tell you the whole story, so that your attachment to Mademoiselle Jacques may be founded on the esteem and respect which she deserves."

"Wait a moment, Palmer," cried Laurent, who was burning to hear what was coming, but was restrained by an honorable scruple. "Do you propose to tell me this with Mademoiselle Jacques's permission, or by her command?"

"Neither," replied Palmer. "Thérèse will never tell you the story of her life."

"Then say no more! I do not wish to know anything except what she wishes me to know."

"Good, very good!" rejoined Palmer, shaking his hand; "but suppose that what I have to tell you clears her from all suspicion?"

"Then why does she conceal it?"

"From consideration for others."

"Well, go on," said Laurent, unable to resist the temptation.

"I shall mention no names," said Palmer. "I will simply tell you that, in one of the large cities of France, there was once a rich banker who seduced a charming girl, his own daughter's governess. He had by her a female child who was born twenty-eight years ago on Saint Jacques's Day, was entered on the municipal register as born of unknown parents, and received no other family name than Jacques. Thérèse is that child.

"The governess received a sum of money from the banker, and, five years later, married one of his clerks, an honest fellow who had no suspicion of anything wrong, the whole affair having been kept very secret. The child was brought up in the country. Her father had taken charge of her. She was afterward placed in a convent, where she received a very fine education and was the object of much care and affection. Her mother saw her constantly during the first years; but after she was married, her husband became suspicious, and, resigning his position with the banker, took his wife to Belgium, where he went into business on his own account and made a fortune. The poor mother had to force back her tears and obey.

“That mother still lives a long way from her daughter; she has other children, and her conduct since her marriage has been beyond reproach; but she has never been happy. Her husband, who loves her dearly, keeps her almost under lock and key, and has never ceased to be jealous of her; which is in her eyes the merited penalty of her sin and her falsehood.

“It would seem that age should have brought confession on the one hand and forgiveness on the other. It would have been arranged so in a novel; but there is nothing less logical than real life, and that household is as disturbed as on the first day, the husband deep in love, uneasy and rough, the wife penitent, but silent and down-trodden.

“And so, under the difficult circumstances in which Thérèse was placed, she was deprived of the support, the assistance, the advice, and the consolation of her mother. But the mother loves her all the more dearly for being obliged to see her in secret, by stealth, when she succeeds in coming to Paris alone for two or three days, as has happened recently. But it is only within a few years that she has been able to devise pretexts of one sort or another, and obtain these occasional leaves of absence. Thérèse adores her mother, and will never make any admission that can possibly compromise her. That is why she will never endure a word of blame concerning the conduct of other women. You may well have thought that at such times she was indirectly claiming indulgence for herself. Nothing of the sort. Thérèse has nothing for which to seek forgiveness; but she has forgiven her mother everything; such is the story of their relations.

“I now have to tell you the story of the Comtesse de — *three stars*. That is what you say in French, I believe, when you do not wish to call people by name.

This countess, who bears neither her title nor her husband's name, is Thérèse again."

"So she is married? she is not a widow?"

"Patience! she is married, and she is not. You will see in a moment. Thérèse was fifteen years old when her father, the banker, became a widower and a free man; for his lawful children were all settled in life. He was an excellent man, and, despite the misstep of which I have told you and which I do not justify, it was impossible not to love him, he was so entertaining and generous. I was very intimate with him. He had told me in confidence the story of Thérèse's birth, and on several occasions he took me with him when he went to see her at the convent where she was. She was beautiful, intelligent, lovable, high-spirited. He would have been glad, I think, to have me make up my mind to ask her hand in marriage; but my heart was not free at that time; otherwise—— But I could not think of it.

"He then asked me some questions about a young Portuguese nobleman who was a frequent visitor at his house, who had very large interests in Havana, and who was very handsome. I had met this Portuguese in Paris, but I did not really know him, and I abstained from giving any opinion about him. He was very fascinating; but, for my part, I would never have placed any confidence in his face. He was the Comte de ——, to whom Thérèse was married a year later.

"I was obliged to go to Russia; when I returned, the banker had died of apoplexy, and Thérèse was married, married to that foreigner, that madman, I will not say that villain, because he was able to retain her love, even after she discovered his crime: that man already had a wife in the colonies when he had the incredible audacity to seek Thérèse's hand and to marry her.

“Do not ask me how Thérèse’s father, a man of sense and experience, had allowed himself to be so deceived. I could but repeat to you what my own experience has taught me, to wit: that in this world, the things that happen are at least half of the time the direct opposite of what seemed likely to happen.

“In the later years of his life the banker had done divers other foolish things which would lead one to think that his reason was slightly clouded. He had left Thérèse a legacy instead of giving her a marriage-portion outright in his life-time. This legacy was of no effect as against the lawful heirs, and Thérèse, who adored her father, would not have applied to the courts even if there had been any chance of success. She was left penniless, therefore, just as she became a mother, and, at the same time, a frantic woman made a descent upon her, demanding her rights and threatening to make a scandal: it was her husband’s first and only lawful wife.

“Thérèse had an extraordinary amount of courage: she pacified the unfortunate creature, and persuaded her not to apply to the courts; she induced the count to take back his wife and start for Havana with her. Because of Thérèse’s birth and the secrecy with which her father had chosen to encompass the manifestations of his affection, her marriage had taken place secretly, abroad, and the young couple had lived abroad ever since. Indeed, their life had been most mysterious. The count, unquestionably afraid of being unmasked if he should reappear in the world, made Thérèse believe that he had a passion for living in solitude with her, and the trustful young wife, in love with her husband and naturally romantic, considered it altogether natural that her husband should travel with her under a false name, to avoid meeting people who were indifferent to him.

“Thus when Thérèse awoke to the horror of her situation, it was not impossible that everything might be shrouded in silence. She consulted a discreet lawyer, and, having acquired the certainty that her marriage was null and void, but that it required a judgment to quash it, if she wished ever to make use of her liberty, she instantly and irrevocably made up her mind to be neither free nor married, rather than besmirch her child’s father with a degrading scandal and conviction. That made the child a bastard beyond recall; but it was better that he should have no name and should remain forever in ignorance of his birth, than that he should claim a tarnished name and bring dishonor upon his father.

“Thérèse still loved the wretch! she confessed as much to me, and he loved her with a diabolical passion. There were heart-rending struggles, indescribable scenes, in which Thérèse fought with an energy beyond her years, I will not say beyond her sex; a woman, when she is heroic, is not heroic by halves.

“At last, she carried the day; she kept her child, expelled the culprit from her arms, and saw him depart with her rival, who, although consumed by jealousy, was so far overcome by her magnanimity that she kissed her feet when they parted.

“Thérèse changed her abode and her name, passed as a widow, having resolved to be forgotten by the few people who had known her, and began to live for her child, with pitiful energy. The child was so dear to her, that she thought that she could find consolation with him; but this last joy was destined not to be of long duration.

“As the count was wealthy, and had no children by his first wife, Thérèse had been persuaded, at her rival’s earnest entreaty, to accept a reasonable allowance, in order to enable her to give her son a suitable education;

learned later that her poor mother would have been powerless to help her; she had not a centime at her disposal for which she had not to account. Moreover, she was entirely ignorant of all her daughter's misfortunes. Thérèse, who wrote to her in secret, had concealed them in order not to drive her to desperation.

"Thérèse lived on in England, giving lessons in French, drawing, and music, for she possessed talents which she had the courage to turn to account, that she might not have to accept compassion from any one.

"After a year, she returned to France, and settled in Paris, where she had never been, and where no one knew her. She was then but twenty years old; she was married at sixteen. She was no longer at all pretty, and it required eight years of repose and resignation to restore her health and her gentle gaiety of long ago.

"During all that time, I saw her only at rare intervals, for I am always travelling; but I always found her dignified and proud, working with invincible courage, and concealing her poverty behind miraculous neatness and cleanliness, never complaining of God, or of any mortal, refusing to talk of the past, sometimes caressing children by stealth and leaving them as soon as one looked at her, fearing, doubtless, that she might betray some emotion.

"I had not seen her for three years, when I came to ask you to paint my portrait, and I was trying to find her address, which I was on the point of asking you for when you mentioned her to me. Having arrived only the night before, I did not know that she had at last attained success, celebrity, and a comfortable income.

"It was only on finding her under such conditions, that it occurred to me that that heart, so long crushed, might live again, and suffer—or be happy. Try to make her

happy, my dear Laurent, she has well earned it! And, if you are not sure that you will not make her suffer, blow out your brains to-night rather than return to her. That is all that I had to say to you."

"Stay," said Laurent, deeply moved; "this Comte de —, is he still alive?"

"Unfortunately, yes. These men who drive other people to despair are always in good health and escape all dangers. They never hand in their resignations; why, this fellow recently had the presumption to send me a letter for Thérèse, which I handed to her in your presence, which she treated as it deserved."

Laurent had thought of marrying Thérèse as he listened to Monsieur Palmer's narrative. That narrative had produced a revolution in him. The monotonous tone, the pronounced accent, and a few curious grammatical lapses which we have not thought it worth our while to reproduce, had imparted to it, in his auditor's vivid imagination, an indefinable something as strange and terrible as Thérèse's destiny. That girl without kindred, that mother without children, that wife without a husband, was surely doomed to an exceptionally cruel fate! What depressing notions of love and life she must have retained! The sphinx reappeared before Laurent's dazzled eyes. Thérèse unveiled seemed to him more mysterious than ever; had she ever been consoled? could she be for a single instant?

He embraced Palmer effusively, swore to him that he loved Thérèse, and that, if he ever succeeded in winning her love, he would remember every hour of his life the hour that had just passed and the story he had just heard. Then, having promised not to betray his knowledge of Mademoiselle Jacques's history, he went home and wrote:

“THÉRÈSE:

“Do not believe a word of all I have been saying to you these last two months. Do not believe either what I said to you when you were afraid that I would fall in love with you. I am not amorous, it is not that; I love you madly. It is absurd, it is insane, it is wretched; but I, who thought that I never should or could say or write to a woman the words *I love you!* find them too cold and constrained to-day to express my feeling for you. I can live no longer with this secret which is choking me, and which you will not guess. I have tried a hundred times to leave you, to go to the end of the world, to forget you. In an hour I am at your door, and very often, at night, consumed with jealousy and almost frantic with rage against myself, I pray God to deliver me from my torment by summoning this unknown lover in whom I do not believe, and whom you invented to disgust me with the thought of you. Show me that man in your arms, or love me, Thérèse! Failing these alternatives, I can conceive but one other, and that is to kill myself and have done with it. This is cowardly, stupid, the commonplace threat worn threadbare by all despairing lovers; but is it my fault if there is a despair which makes all those who undergo it utter the same shriek, and am I mad because I happen to be a man like other men?

“Of what avail has been all that I have invented to protect myself from it, and to render my poor personality as harmless as it wished to be free?

“Have you anything to reproach me for in my dealings with you, Thérèse? Am I a conceited ass, a rake, I who prided myself upon making myself stupid so as to give you confidence in my friendship? But why do you wish that I should die without having loved, you who alone can teach me what love is, and who know it well? You have

a treasure in your heart, and you smile as you sit beside a poor devil who is dying of hunger and thirst. You toss him a small coin from time to time; that means friendship in your eyes; it is not even pity, for you must know that the drop of water increases the thirst.

"And why do you not love me? You may have loved some one who was a worse man than I. I am not worth much, to be sure, but I love you, and is not that everything?

"You will not believe it; you will say again that I am mistaken, as you said before! No, you cannot say so, unless you lie to God and to yourself. You see that my torment gets the better of me, and that I am making an absurd declaration, I who dread nothing on earth so much as being laughed at by you!

"Thérèse, do not think me corrupt. You know very well that the bottom of my heart has never been sullied, and that from the abysses into which I have cast myself I have always, in spite of myself, raised my voice to Heaven. You know that with you I am as chaste as an infant, and you have not feared to take my head in your hands sometimes, as if you were about to kiss me on the forehead. And you would say: 'Bad head! you deserve to be broken.'—And yet, instead of crushing it like the head of a snake, you would try to make the pure and burning breath of your mind penetrate it. Ah! well, you have succeeded only too well; and, now that you have kindled the fire on the altar, you turn away and say to me: 'Place it in somebody's else care! Marry; love some sweet, devoted, lovely girl; have children, be ambitious for them, live a virtuous life, have a happy home—have everything, except me!'

"But, Thérèse, it is you whom I love passionately, not myself. Since I have known you, you have been

striving to make me believe in happiness and to cultivate my taste for it. It is not your fault if I have not become as selfish as a spoiled child. But I am worthy of a better fate. I do not ask if your love would mean happiness to me. I simply know that it would be life, and that, good or bad, it is that life, or death, that I must have."

IV

Thérèse was deeply distressed by this letter. She was, as it were, struck by lightning. Her love bore so little resemblance to Laurent's, that she fancied that she did not love him with love, especially when she reread the expressions used by him. There was no delirium in Thérèse's heart, or, if there were, it had entered there, drop by drop, so slowly that she did not notice it, and believed that she was as thoroughly mistress of herself as on the first day. The word *passion* offended her.

"Passions! I?" she said to herself. "In Heaven's name, does he think that I don't know what passion is, and that I want any more of that poisoned draught? What have I done to him, I who have given him so much affection and thought, that he should propose to me, by way of thanks, despair, madness, and death?—After all," she thought, "it is not his fault, poor creature! He doesn't know what he wants, nor what he asks for. He seeks love like the philosopher's stone, in which one strives all the more earnestly to believe because he cannot grasp it. He thinks that I have it, and that I amuse myself by refusing to give it to him! There is always a touch of frenzy in whatever he thinks. How can I

former miseries to reappear upon her unclouded, peaceful horizon. Every word written on that paper was like a hymn of death which she had heard in the past, a prophecy of fresh misfortunes to come.

She tried to recover her serenity by resuming her painting. That was her great remedy for all the petty ills of external life; but it was powerless that day; the terror which that passion aroused in her assailed her in the purest and most private sanctuary of her present life.

"Two pleasures disturbed or destroyed," she said to herself, throwing away her brush and taking up the letter: "work and friendship."

She passed the rest of the day without making up her mind to anything. But one point was perfectly clear in her mind, the determination to say no; but she proposed that it should be no in reality, and was not bent upon announcing her decision in hot haste, with the timorous abruptness of the woman who is afraid of succumbing unless she makes haste to barricade the door. How to say that *no* from which there should be no appeal, which should leave no hope behind, yet should not be like a red-hot iron on the sweet memory of friendship, was a hard and bitter problem for her to solve. That memory was her own love; when one has the body of a dearly loved one to bury, one cannot decide, without bitter sorrow, to place a white cloth over the face and bestow the body in the common grave. You would fain embalm it in a grave of its own, which you could look upon from time to time, praying for the soul of him whose dust it contains.

Darkness came upon her before she had hit upon any expedient for denying herself without inflicting too much pain. Catherine, seeing that she dined with little appetite, asked her anxiously if she were ill.

"No," she replied, "I have something on my mind."

"Ah! you work too hard," said the good old woman, "you do not think about taking care of yourself."

Thérèse raised her finger; it was a gesture with which Catherine was familiar, and which signified: "Don't speak of that."

The hour at which Thérèse received her few friends had, for some time past, been taken advantage of by Laurent only. Although the door stood open for whoever chose to come, he alone came, whether because the others were away from Paris—it was the season for going into the country or remaining there—or because they had detected in Thérèse a certain preoccupation, an involuntary and poorly concealed desire to talk exclusively with Monsieur de Fauvel.

Laurent usually arrived at eight, and Thérèse said to herself as she glanced at the clock:

"I did not answer his letter; he won't come to-day."

There was a horrible void in her heart as she added:

"He must never come again."

How was she to pass that endless evening, which she was accustomed to pass in conversation with her young friend, while she worked at some little sketch or some fancy-work, and he smoked his cigar, half-reclining lazily on the cushions of the couch? It occurred to her to escape the impending ennui by calling upon a friend in Faubourg Saint-Germain, with whom she sometimes went to the play; but her friend always retired early, and it would be too late when she arrived. It was such a long way, and the cabs moved so slowly! Then, too, she would have to dress, and Thérèse, who lived in slippers, like all artists who work with enthusiasm and cannot bear to be incommoded by their clothes, was very indolent in the matter of arraying herself in visiting costume. Suppose she should put on a veil and a shawl, send for

a cab, and drive slowly through the deserted avenues of the Bois de Boulogne? Thérèse had sometimes taken such a drive with Laurent, when the evening heat was so stifling that they sought a breath of fresh air under the trees. Such excursions with anybody else would have compromised her seriously; but Laurent guarded religiously the secret of her confidence, and they both took delight in the unconventionality of those mysterious tête-à-têtes, which concealed no mystery. She remembered them as if they were already far away, and said to herself, sighing at the thought that they would never return:

"Those were happy times! They can never come again for him who suffers, or for me who am no longer in ignorance of it."

At nine o'clock, she at last attempted to answer Laurent's letter, but a peal of the bell made her heart beat fast. It was he! She rose to tell Catherine to say that she had gone out. Catherine returned: it was only a letter from him. Thérèse had an involuntary thrill of regret that it was not himself.

There were only these few words in the letter:

"Adieu, Thérèse! you do not love me, and I love you like a child!"

These two lines made Thérèse tremble from head to foot. The only passion that she had never striven to extinguish in her heart was maternal love. That wound, although apparently healed, was still bleeding like unsatisfied love.

"Like a child!" she repeated, crumpling the letter in her quivering hands. "He loves me like a child! *Mon Dieu!* what does he mean by that? does he know how he hurts me? *Adieu!* My boy had learned to say *adieu!*"

but he did not say it when they carried him away. I should have heard him! and I shall never hear him again!"

Thérèse was overexcited, and, as her emotion seized upon the most painful of pretexts for manifesting itself, she burst into tears.

"Did you call me?" said Catherine, entering the room. "*Mon Dieu!* what is the matter? You are weeping as you used to in the old days!"

"Nothing, nothing, leave me," replied Thérèse. "If any one comes to see me, say that I have gone to the theatre. I want to be alone. I am ill."

Catherine left the room, but went into the garden. She had seen Laurent creeping stealthily along the hedge.

"Do not sulk like this," she said. "I don't know why my mistress is crying; but it must be your fault, you make her unhappy. She doesn't want to see you. Go, ask her pardon!"

Catherine, despite all her respect for Thérèse and devotion to her, was satisfied that Laurent was her lover.

"She is weeping?" he cried. "Oh! *mon Dieu!* why is she weeping?"

And he rushed across the little garden and threw himself at Thérèse's feet, who was sobbing in the small salon, with her face in her hands.

Laurent would have been overjoyed to see her thus if he had been the rake that he sometimes sought to appear; but in reality he was wonderfully tender-hearted, and Thérèse possessed the secret power of arousing his real nature. The tears with which her face was bathed caused him genuine and profound grief. On his knees he implored her to forget his madness, and to restore him to reason by her gentleness and good sense.

"I wish only what you wish," he said, "and since you weep for our dead and gone friendship, I swear that

I will bring it to life again rather than cause you fresh sorrow. But let us be frank with each other, my sweet, kind Thérèse, my dearest sister, for I no longer feel the strength to deceive you! do you summon the courage to accept my love as a deplorable discovery that you have made, and as a disease of which you propose to cure me by patience and pity. I will do my utmost in that direction, I swear to you! I will not ask you for so much as a kiss, and I think that that will not cost me so much as you might fear, for I do not yet know whether my senses are involved in all this. No, really I do not think it. How could it be so, after the life I have led and am at liberty to lead still? What I feel is a thirst of the heart; why should it frighten you? Give me a little of your heart, and take all of mine. Consent to be loved by me, and do not tell me again that it is an insult to you, for what drives me to despair is to see that you despise me too much to permit me, even in a dream, to aspire to you. That lowers me so in my own eyes that it makes me long to kill the miserable devil who so offends your moral sense. Raise me, rather, from the slough into which I have fallen, and bid me expiate my evil life and become worthy of you. Yes, leave me a ray of hope! however faint it may be, it will make another man of me. You will see, you will see, Thérèse! The mere idea of striving to seem a better man to you gives me strength already; I can feel it! do not take it from me. What will become of me if you spurn me? I shall descend again all the steps I have climbed up since I have known you. All the fruit of our sacred friendship will be lost, so far as I am concerned. You will have tried to cure a sick man, and will have killed him instead! And then, too, will you yourself, who are so noble and so good, be content with your work? will

you not reproach yourself for not having conducted it to a better end? Be to me a Sister of Charity, who does not confine herself to dressing the hurts of a wounded man, but who strives to reconcile his soul with Heaven. Come, Thérèse, do not withdraw your faithful hands from mine, do not turn away your face, so lovely in sorrow. I will not leave your feet until you have at least forgiven me for loving you, if you have not authorized me to love you!"

Thérèse could but accept this effusion as serious, for Laurent was perfectly honest. To hold him off with distrust would have been equivalent to an avowal of the too warm affection which she had for him; a woman who shows fear is already vanquished. So she assumed a brave face, and perhaps it was not mere affectation, for she believed that her strength was still equal to the task. Indeed, she was not ill-advised by her very weakness.

To break with him at that moment would have been to arouse terrible emotions which it was much better to appease, reserving the right to relax the bond gently, with skill and prudence. That might be a matter of some days. Laurent was so impressionable, and rushed so abruptly from one extreme to the other!

So they both calmed down, assisting each other to forget the storm, and even exerting themselves to laugh at it, in order to afford each other mutual encouragement touching the future; but, do what they would, their position was essentially changed, and their intimacy had taken a giant's stride. The fear of losing each other had brought them nearer together, and, while vowing that there had been no change in their friendship, there was in all their words and thoughts a sort of languor of the heart, a sort of rapturous fatigue, which was in effect the enfranchisement of love!

Catherine, when she brought the tea, put them completely at their ease by her artless, maternal solicitude.

"You would do much better," she said to Thérèse, "to eat the wing of a chicken instead of making a hole in your stomach with this tea!—Do you know," she said to Laurent, pointing at her mistress, "that she never touched her dinner?"

"Then let her sup at once!" cried Laurent. "Don't say no, Thérèse; you must do it! What in Heaven's name would become of me if you should be taken sick?"

And as Thérèse refused to eat, for she really was not hungry, he declared, at a sign from Catherine urging him to insist, that he was hungry himself; and that was quite true, for he had forgotten to dine. Thereupon Thérèse was delighted to give him some supper; and they ate together for the first time, which was no trivial occurrence in Thérèse's lonely and modest life. To eat together is one of the greatest promoters of intimacy. It is the satisfaction in common of a material necessity of existence, and if you seek a loftier meaning in it, it is a communion, as the word indicates.

Laurent, whose ideas naturally took a poetic turn, even in the midst of merriment, laughingly compared himself to the Prodigal Son, for whom Catherine made haste to kill the fatted calf. This fatted calf, which presented itself in the guise of a meagre chicken, naturally added to the gaiety of the two friends. It was so little for the young man's appetite to feed upon, that Thérèse was distressed. The quarter was sadly lacking in resources, and Laurent insisted that Catherine should not put herself out for him. In the depths of a closet they unearthed a huge jar of guava jelly. It was a present from Palmer, which Thérèse had forgotten to open, but which Laurent opened and attacked with great zest, talking meanwhile

but which he seized upon as if by inspiration, without opposition on the part of the surprised and deeply-moved Thérèse. It seemed to him that he was under his own roof, and that he had won the privilege of looking after the mistress of the house, like a loving brother or an old friend. And Thérèse, without a thought of the danger of this taking possession, watched him with wide-open, wondering eyes, asking herself if she had not been radically mistaken hitherto in regarding that affectionate and devoted child as a reserved and gloomy man.

However, Thérèse reflected during the night; but, in the morning, Laurent, who, although he had no premeditated plan, did not propose to give her time to breathe,—for he had ceased to breathe himself,—sent her magnificent flowers, rare sweetmeats, and a note so loving, so gentle and respectful, that she could not fail to be touched by it. He said that he was the happiest of men, that he desired nothing more except her forgiveness, and that, as soon as he had obtained that, he should be the king of the world. He would accept any deprivation, any harsh decree, provided only that he was not forbidden to see and talk with his friend. That alone would be beyond his strength; all the rest was as nothing. He was well aware that Thérèse could have no love for him; which fact did not deter him from saying, ten lines lower down: “Is not our sanctified love indissoluble?”

And stating thus the pros and the cons, the false and the true, a hundred times a day, with a candor by which he was unquestionably deceived himself, encompassing Thérèse with delicate attentions, striving with all his heart to give her confidence in the chastity of their relations, and at every instant talking to her in a lofty strain of his adoration for her, seeking to divert her when she was disturbed in mind, to cheer her when she was sad,

to melt her toward himself when she was stern, he led her insensibly to the point where she had no other will and no other existence than his.

Nothing is so perilous as those intimacies in which the parties have exchanged a promise not to attack each other, when neither of the two inspires a secret physical repulsion in the other. Artists, because of their independent life and the nature of their occupations, which oblige them often to depart from social conventions, are more exposed to these perils than they who live by rule and whose imaginations are less active. We should forgive them, therefore, for more sudden impressions and more feverish impulses. Public opinion realizes this duty, for it is generally more indulgent to those who go astray, perforce, in the tempest than those whose lives are passed in a flat calm. And then the world demands from artists the fire of inspiration, and that fire, which overflows for the enjoyment and enthusiasm of the public, must inevitably consume themselves in time. Then we pity them; and the honest bourgeois, returning to his family at night, after learning of their misfortunes and downfall, says to his excellent and gentle helpmeet:

“You remember that poor girl who sang so well? she is dead of a broken heart. And that famous poet who wrote such fine verses has killed himself. It’s a great pity, wife. All those people end badly. We, the simple creatures, are the happy ones.”

And the honest bourgeois is right.

Thérèse had lived a long while, however, if not as an honest bourgeois,—for one must have a family for that, and God had denied her a family,—at all events as a hard-working young woman, working from early morning, and not regaling herself with pleasure or sloth at the end of her day’s work. She constantly aspired to

the joys of a regular, domestic life; she loved order, and, far from displaying the childish contempt which certain artists lavished upon what they called, in those days, the grocer class, she bitterly regretted that she had not married in that safe and modest social circle where she would have found affection and security instead of talent and renown. But we do not choose our own destinies, for fools and ambitious mortals are not the only imprudent wights whom destiny overwhelms.

V

Thérèse had no weakness for Laurent in the ironical, libertine sense in which that word is commonly used in love. It was by an effort of her will that she said to him, after many nights of painful meditation:

"I wish what you wish, because we have reached the point where the sin still to be committed is the inevitable reparation of a succession of sins already committed. I have been culpable toward you, in not having had the selfish prudence to fly from you; it is better that I should be culpable toward myself by remaining your companion and your consolation, at the price of my peace of mind and my pride.—Listen," she added, grasping his hand with all the strength of which she was capable, "do not withdraw this hand, and, whatever happens, always retain enough honor and courage to remember that before being your mistress I was *your friend*. I said it to myself on the first day of your passion: we loved each other too well thus, not to love each other less well under other circumstances; but that happiness could not last for me,

because you no longer share it, and pain has taken the upper hand in that liaison, in which for you pain and pleasure are mingled. I simply ask you, if you become weary of my love, as you become weary of my friendship, to remember that it is not an instant of frenzy that has driven me into your arms, but an impulse of my heart and a more loving and lasting sentiment than voluptuous intoxication. I am not superior to other women, and I do not assume the right to deem myself invulnerable; but I love you so ardently and so purely that I should never have transgressed with you, if you could have been saved by my strength. After I had believed that that strength was beneficial to you, that it would teach you to discover your own strength and to purge yourself of an evil past, I found that you were convinced of the contrary, so convinced that to-day the contrary has actually happened: you are becoming bitter, and it seems that, if I resist, you are ready to hate me and to return to your life of debauchery, blaspheming even our poor friendship. And so I offer to God the sacrifice of my life for you. If I am destined to suffer because of your nature or your past, so be it. I shall be amply repaid if I rescue you from the suicide you were in a fair way to commit when I first knew you. If I do not succeed, I shall at least have made the trial, and God, who knows how sincere my devotion is, will pardon me if it is of no avail!"

In the early days of this union, Laurent's enthusiasm, gratitude, and faith were admirable to see. He rose superior to himself, he had outbursts of religious fervor, he blessed his dear mistress for having made known to him at last the true, chaste, and noble love of which he had dreamed so much, and of which he had thought that he was to be deprived forever by his own fault. She dippe

him anew, he said, in the waters of his baptism, she wiped out even the memory of his evil days. It was adoration, worship, ecstatic contemplation.

Thérèse ingenuously believed in him. She abandoned herself to the joy of having caused all that happiness and restored all that grandeur of soul to one of God's elect. She forgot all her apprehensions, or smiled at them as meaningless dreams which she had mistaken for arguments. They laughed at them together; they reproached themselves for having misunderstood each other and for not having thrown themselves on each other's neck the very first day, they were so perfectly adapted to understand, appreciate, and cherish each other. There was no more talk of prudence, no more sermons. Thérèse had grown ten years younger. She was a child, more childish than Laurent himself; she devoted all her energies to the task of arranging his existence so that he would not feel the fold of a rose-leaf.

Poor Thérèse! Her intoxication did not last eight whole days.

Whence comes that terrible chastisement inflicted on those who have abused the forces of youth, a chastisement which consists in making them incapable of appreciating the joys of a harmonious and logical existence? Is the young man a very great criminal who, being launched in the world without a curb and with boundless aspirations, deems himself capable of exterminating all the phantoms that pass, of mastering all the pleasures that beckon to him? Is his sin anything else than ignorance, and could he have learned in his cradle that life should be a constant battle with one's self? There are some of these young men who are really to be pitied, and whom it is difficult to condemn, some who may have been without a guide, a careful mother, a judicious friend,

a sincere first mistress. Vertigo has seized them at the outset; corruption has hurled itself upon them as upon its lawful prey, to make brutes of those who have more senses than heart, to make madmen of those who struggle, as Laurent did, between the mire of reality and the ideal of their dreams.

That is what Thérèse said to herself in order to keep on loving that suffering soul, and why she endured the outrages we are about to describe.

The seventh day of their happiness was irrevocably the last. That ill-fated figure was never absent from Thérèse's mind. Fortuitous circumstances combined to prolong that eternity of joy throughout a whole week; no one with whom she was intimate had come to see Thérèse, she had no work that was urgent; Laurent promised to set to work afresh as soon as he could resume possession of his studio, then in the hands of workmen who were making certain repairs. The heat in Paris was most oppressive; he proposed to Thérèse that they should pass forty-eight hours in the country, in the woods. It was the seventh day.

They set off by boat, and arrived at night-fall at a hotel. After dinner, they went out to ride in the forest in the lovely moonlight. They hired horses and a guide, who soon wearied them by his boastful loquacity. They had ridden about two leagues when they came to the foot of a cliff with which Laurent was familiar. He proposed to dismiss the horses and the guide, and to return on foot, even if it were a little late.

"I am sure," said Thérèse, "I don't know why we should not pass the whole night in the forest. There are no wolves or thieves here. Let us stay as long as you choose, and never go back, if you say so."

They were left alone; and thereupon a strange, almost impossible scene occurred, which we must describe just

as it happened. They had climbed to the top of the cliff, and were sitting on the thick moss, which was burned and withered by the intense heat. Laurent was gazing at the magnificent spectacle of the sky, where the moon dimmed the brilliancy of the stars. Only two or three of the largest could be distinguished in the zenith. Laurent, lying on his back, gazed at them.

"I would like to know," he said, "the name of this one almost over my head; it seems to be looking at me."

"That is Vega," said Thérèse.

"So you know the names of all the stars, do you, my learned lady?"

"Of almost all. It isn't difficult, and in fifteen minutes you shall know as many as I do, if you choose."

"No, thanks; I much prefer not to know them; I prefer to give them names of my own."

"And you are right."

"I prefer to roam at random among those lines up yonder, and arrange combinations of groups according to my own ideas, rather than walk according to the whims of other people. After all, perhaps I am wrong, Thérèse! You prefer the beaten paths, don't you?"

"They are softer for tender feet. I haven't seven-league boots like you!"

"What sarcasm! you know very well that you are a stronger and better walker than I!"

"That is easily understood: it is because I have no wings to fly."

"See to it that you don't get hold of any and leave me behind! But let us not talk about parting: that word would make the heavens weep!"

"What! who has any idea of such a thing? Don't say that ghastly word again!"

"No, no! let's not think of it!" he cried, springing suddenly to his feet.

"What's the matter, and where are you going?" she said.

"I don't know," he replied. "Ah! by the way—There's an extraordinary echo here, and the last time I came here with little—you don't care to know her name, do you? I enjoyed listening to it here, while she sang on yonder little hillock, just opposite us."

Thérèse made no reply. He saw that this unseasonable evocation of one of his undesirable acquaintances was not a very delicate contribution to the joys of a romantic midnight expedition with the queen of his heart. Why had it come into his head? how was it that the name of some foolish virgin or other had come to his lips? He was mortified by his blunder; but, instead of ingenuously blaming himself for it and wooing oblivion by torrents of loving words which he was quite capable of pouring forth when passion inspired his heart, he determined to brazen it out, and asked Thérèse if she would sing for him.

"I could not do it," she replied, gently. "It is a long while since I have ridden, and it has made me a little oppressed."

"If it is only a little, make an effort, Thérèse; it will give me so much pleasure!"

Thérèse was too proud to be angry, she was only grieved. She turned her face away, and pretended to cough.

"Well, well," said he, laughingly, "you are only a poor weak woman! And then you don't believe in my echo, I can see that. I propose that you shall hear it. Stay here. I will climb up to the top of the hill. You are not afraid to remain alone for five minutes, I trust?"

"No," replied Thérèse, "I am not at all afraid."

To climb to the other height, he had to go down into the little ravine which separated it from that on which they were; but the ravine was deeper than it seemed. When Laurent, having gone down half-way, saw how far he still had to go, he stopped, reluctant to leave Thérèse alone so long, and called to her, asking if she had called him.

"No, indeed I did not!" she shouted, not wishing to thwart his caprice.

It is impossible to describe what took place in Laurent's brain; he took that *indeed I did not* for a rebuke, and continued to descend, but less quickly, and musing as he walked.

"I have wounded her," he said, "and now she is sulky, as in the days when we played at being brother and sister. Is she going to continue to have these moody fits, now that she is my mistress? But why did I wound her? I was wrong, certainly, but it was unintentional. It is impossible that some scrap of my past should not come to my mind now and then. Is it to be an insult to her and a mortification to me every time? What does my past matter to her, since she has accepted me as I am? And yet I was wrong! yes, I was wrong; but will she never happen to mention the wretch whom she loved and thought she had married? In spite of herself, Thérèse when she is with me will remember the days she lived without me, and shall I twist it into a crime?"

He instantly answered his own question:

"Oh! yes, it would be intolerable! So I have done very wrong, and I ought to have asked her pardon at once."

But he had already reached that stage of mental fatigue when the mind is sated with enthusiasm, and when the weak and shrinking creature that every one of us is, to a

greater or less extent, feels that he must resume possession of himself.

"Must humble myself again, promise again, persuade again, shed tears again?" he said to himself. "Great God! can't she be happy and trustful for a single week? It's my fault, I agree, but it's hers still more for making so much out of so little, and spoiling this lovely poetic night which I had planned to pass with her in one of the loveliest spots on earth. I have been here before with rakes and wantons, it is true; but to what corner of the outskirts of Paris could I have taken her where I was not likely to run against some such unpleasant reminiscence? Surely they can hardly be said to enchant me, and it is almost cruel to reproach me with them."

As he replied thus in his heart to the reproaches with which Thérèse was probably upbraiding him in hers, he reached the bottom of the ravine, where he felt disturbed and fatigued as after a quarrel, and threw himself on the grass in a fit of annoyance and weariness. For seven whole days he had not belonged to himself; he was conscious of a longing to reconquer his liberty, and to fancy himself alone and unsubdued for a moment.

Thérèse, for her part, was heart-broken and terrified at the same time. Why had the word *parting* been suddenly hurled at her like a shrill cry amid that tranquil atmosphere that they were breathing together? what was the occasion of it? how had she provoked it? She tried in vain to determine. Laurent himself could not have explained it to her. All that had followed was grossly cruel, and how angry he must have been, that man of exquisite breeding, to have said it! But what was the cause of his anger? Had he a serpent within him that gnawed his heart and extorted from him wild and blasphemous words?

She had followed him with her eyes down the slope until he had entered the dark shadow of the ravine. Then she saw him no more, and was surprised at the time that elapsed before he appeared on the slope of the other hill. She was frightened at last—he might have fallen over some precipice. In vain did her eager glances question the grass-grown depths, bristling with huge, dark rocks. She rose, intending to call to him, when an indescribable cry of distress reached her ears, a hoarse, ghastly, desperate shriek, which made her hair stand on end.

She darted away like an arrow in the direction of the voice. If there had really been a precipice, she would have rushed over the edge without reflection; but there was only a steep incline, where she slipped several times on the moss and tore her dress on the bushes. Nothing stopped her; she reached Laurent's side, how, she knew not, and found him on his feet, with haggard eyes and trembling convulsively.

"Ah! here you are," he said, grasping her arm; "you did well to come! I should have died!"

And, like Don Juan after the reply of the statue, he added in a sharp, abrupt tone: "*Let us go away from here!*"

He led her to the road, walking at random, and unable to tell what had happened to him.

He became calmer at last, after ten or fifteen minutes, and sat down beside her in a clearing. They had no idea where they were; the ground was strewn with flat rocks which resembled tombs, and among them grew juniper-trees, which one might well have mistaken at night for cypresses.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Laurent, suddenly, "are we in a cemetery? Why did you bring me here?"

"It is simply a tract of untilled land," she replied. "We passed through many similar ones this evening. If you don't like it, let's not stop here, but go back under the large trees."

"No, let us stay here," he rejoined. "Since chance or destiny brings these thoughts of death into my mind, I may as well face them and exhaust their horror. They have their charm, like everything else, have they not, Thérèse? Everything that moves the imagination powerfully, affords us enjoyment, more or less painful. When a head is to fall on the scaffold, the multitude goes to see, and it is altogether natural. We cannot live upon mild emotions alone; we need terrible emotions to make us realize the intensity of life."

He spoke thus, as if at random, for some moments. Thérèse dared not question him, and strove to divert his thoughts; she saw that he had had an attack of delirium. At last, he recovered sufficiently to desire and to be able to describe it to her.

He had had an hallucination. As he lay on the grass, in the ravine, his brain had become confused. He had heard the echo sing all by itself, and its song was an obscene refrain. Then, as he raised himself on his elbow to seek an explanation of the phenomenon, he had seen a man rush toward him over the grass, a pale-faced man, with torn garments, and his hair flying in the wind.

"I saw him so plainly," he said, "that I had time to say to myself that he was some belated citizen who had been surprised and pursued by robbers, and I even looked for my cane to go to his assistance, but my cane was lost in the grass, and the man was still running toward me. When he was close to me, I saw that he was drunk and that no one was chasing him. As he passed me, he cast a stupid, hideous glance at me, and made a fiendish

grimace of hatred and contempt. Then I was afraid, and threw myself face downward on the ground, for that man—was myself!—Yes, it was my ghost, Thérèse. Don't be frightened, don't think me mad, it was a vision. I realized it when I found myself alone in the darkness. I could not have distinguished the features of any human face, I had seen that one only in my imagination; but how distinct, how ghastly, how horrible it was. It was myself twenty years older, with features wasted by debauchery or disease, wild eyes, a brutalized mouth, and, despite the total wiping out of my vitality, there was enough energy remaining in that phantom to insult and defy the creature that I am now. Thereupon, I said to myself: 'O my God! is that what I shall be in my mature years?' This evening, there came into my mind the memory of some miserable past experiences of mine, and I blurted them out involuntarily; is it because I still bear within me that old man from whom I believed that I was free? The spectre of debauchery will not release his victims, and even in Thérèse's arms he will mock at me and cry: '*It is too late!*'

"Then I rose to go back to you, my poor Thérèse. I intended to ask your pardon for my vileness and to beg you to save me; but I don't know how many minutes or centuries I should have turned round and round, unable to take a step forward, if you had not come to me at last. I recognized you instantly, Thérèse; I was not afraid of you, and I felt that I was saved."

It was difficult to determine, when Laurent talked thus, whether he was telling of something that had really happened, or whether he had confused in his brain an allegory born of his bitter reflections and a vision which he had seen indistinctly in a sort of half-sleep. He swore, however, that he did not fall asleep on the grass,

and that he had not once lost consciousness of the place where he was or of the passage of time; but even that was difficult to decide. Thérèse had lost sight of him, and to her the time had seemed mortally long.

She asked him if he were subject to these hallucinations.

"Yes," he said, "when I am drunk; but I have been drunk with love only, in the fortnight that you have been mine."

"The fortnight!" echoed Thérèse in amazement.

"No, less than that," he replied; "don't split hairs with me about dates; you see that I have not my wits as yet. Let us walk, that will fix me all right."

"But you need rest; we must think of returning to the hotel."

"Well, what are we doing?"

"We are not going in the right direction; our backs are turned to our starting-point."

"Do you want me to go back over that infernal rock?"

"No, but let us go to the right."

"That is just the wrong direction."

Thérèse insisted that she was not mistaken. Laurent refused to yield; he even lost his temper, and spoke in an irritated tone, as if that were a subject for quarrelling. Thérèse yielded at last, and followed where he chose to go. She was completely crushed by emotion and sadness. Laurent had spoken to her in a tone which she had never dreamed of assuming with Catherine, even when the old servant angered her. She forgave him because she felt that he was ill; but his state of painful excitement alarmed her so much the more.

Thanks to Laurent's obstinacy, they lost themselves in the forest, walked about four hours, and did not return to the hotel until daybreak. The walking in the fine, heavy

sand of the forest is very fatiguing. Thérèse could hardly drag herself along, and Laurent, revived by that violent exercise, did not think of slackening his pace out of regard for her. He walked ahead, constantly asserting that he had found the right path, asking her from time to time if she were tired, and never suspecting that, when she answered *no*, her purpose was to spare him any regret for having caused the misadventure.

The next day, Laurent had forgotten all about it; he had suffered a severe shock, however, from that strange attack, but it is a peculiarity of excessively nervous temperaments that they recover from such shocks as if by magic. Indeed, Thérèse had occasion to notice, that on the day following that lamentable experience it was she who was utterly exhausted, while he seemed to have acquired fresh strength.

She had not slept, expecting to find him suffering from some serious illness; but he took a bath, and felt quite disposed to repeat the excursion. He seemed to have forgotten how disastrous that nocturnal experience had been to the honeymoon! The melancholy impression soon wore away, so far as Thérèse was concerned. When they returned to Paris, she imagined that nothing had changed between them; but that same evening Laurent chose to draw a caricature of Thérèse and himself wandering through the forest by moonlight, he with his wild, distraught look, she with her torn gown and her fatigue-stricken body. Artists are so accustomed to make caricatures of one another, that Thérèse was amused by this one; but, although she, too, had plenty of facility and humor at the end of her pencil, she would not have caricatured Laurent for anything in the world; and when she saw him sketch from a comical standpoint that nocturnal scene which had so tortured her, she was deeply grieved.

"You are lucky," he said to Thérèse, "to wake every morning with your heart in the same place. You see, I lose mine while I am asleep. It is like the night-cap my nurse used to put on my head when I was a baby; sometimes she found it at my feet and sometimes on the floor."

Thérèse said to herself that it was impossible that serenity could come to that troubled soul all at once, and that it must become accustomed to it by degrees. To that end, he must not be prevented from returning sometimes to active life; but how could she arrange it so that that activity would not be a blemish, a deadly blow dealt at their ideal? Thérèse could not be jealous of the mistresses Laurent had had previously; but she could not understand how she could kiss his brow on the morrow of a debauch. She must, therefore, since the work, which he had resumed with great ardor, excited him instead of calming him, seek with him a vent for that surplus energy. The natural vent would have been the enthusiasm of love; but that was an additional source of excitement, after which Laurent would fain have scaled the third heaven; lacking the strength for that, he turned his eyes in the direction of hell, and his brain, sometimes his very face, received a diabolical reflection therefrom.

Thérèse studied his tastes and his caprices, and was surprised to find them easy to satisfy. Laurent was greedy of diversion and of surprises; it was not necessary to take him among scenes of enchantment that could never exist in real life; it was enough to take him no matter where, and provide some amusement for him which he did not expect. If, instead of giving him a dinner at home, Thérèse informed him, putting on her hat the while, that they were to dine together at a restaurant, and if she suddenly asked him to take her to

fashionable young men of another class, and, on the other hand, his friends in that other class could not understand his conversion and did not believe in it. So that Thérèse's fond and devoted love was regarded as a frenzied caprice. Would a chaste woman have chosen for her lover, in preference to all the serious men of her acquaintance, the only one who had led a dissolute life with all the vilest harlots in Paris? And, in the eyes of those who did not choose to condemn Thérèse, Laurent's violent passion seemed to be simply a successful piece of lechery, of which he was shrewd enough to shake himself clear when he was weary of it.

Thus on all sides Mademoiselle Jacques lost caste on account of the choice which she had made and which she seemed desirous to advertise.

Such, unquestionably, was not Thérèse's purpose; but with Laurent, although he had resolved to encompass her with respect, it was hardly possible to conceal her mode of life. He could not renounce the outside world, and she must either let him return thither alone to his destruction or go with him to preserve him from destruction. He was accustomed to see the crowd and to be seen by it. When he had lived in retirement a single day, he fancied that he had fallen into a cellar, and shouted lustily for gas and sunlight.

In addition to this loss of consideration, Thérèse was called upon to make another sacrifice: she was no longer sure of her footing pecuniarily. Hitherto she had earned enough money by her work to live comfortably, but only by observing strict regularity in her habits, by looking carefully after her expenses, and by working faithfully and regularly. Laurent's passion for the unexpected soon straitened her. She concealed her position from him, being unwilling to refuse to sacrifice to him that priceless

time which constitutes the larger part of the artist's capital.

But all this was simply the frame of a much gloomier picture, over which Thérèse threw a veil so thick that no one suspected her unhappiness, and her friends, scandalized or distressed by her situation, held aloof from her, saying:

"She is intoxicated. Let us wait until she opens her eyes; that will come very soon."

It had already come. Thérèse acquired more and more thoroughly every day the sad certainty that Laurent no longer loved her, or loved her so little that there was no further hope of happiness, either for him or for her, in their union. It was in Italy that they both became absolutely certain of the fact, and we are now to describe their journey thither.

VI

Laurent had long wanted to see Italy; it had been his dream from childhood, and the unhopèd-for sale of certain of his paintings made it possible at last for him to realize that dream. He offered to take Thérèse, proudly displaying his little fortune, and swearing by all he held dear that, if she would not go with him, he would abandon the trip. Thérèse knew well that he would not abandon it without regret and without bitterly reproaching her. So she exerted her utmost ingenuity to obtain some money herself. She succeeded by pledging her future work; and they set out late in the autumn.

Laurent had formed some very erroneous ideas concerning Italy, and expected to find spring in December

as soon as he caught sight of the Mediterranean. He had to acknowledge his error, and to suffer from a very sharp attack of frosty weather on the trip from Marseille to Genoa. Genoa pleased him immensely, and as there were many pictures to see there, as it was the principal object of the journey so far as he was concerned, he readily agreed to stay there one or two months, and hired furnished apartments.

After a week, Laurent had seen everything, and Thérèse was just beginning to settle down to painting; for it should be said here that she was obliged to work. In order to obtain a few thousand-franc notes, she had made an agreement with a dealer in pictures to bring him copies of several unpublished portraits, which he proposed to have engraved. It was not an unpleasant task; the dealer, being a man of taste, had specified a number of portraits by Van Dyck, one at Genoa, one at Florence, etc. The copying of that master required a special gift, by virtue of which Thérèse had developed her own talent and earned a livelihood before she undertook to paint portraits on her own account; but she must needs begin by obtaining permission from the owners of those masterpieces; and, although she exerted herself to the utmost, a whole week passed before she was able to begin to copy the portrait at Genoa.

Laurent felt in nowise disposed to copy anything under heaven. His individuality was too pronounced and too fiery for that sort of work. He was benefited in other ways by the sight of great works. That was his right. And yet, many a great master, having so excellent an opportunity, would have been likely to take advantage of it. Laurent was not yet twenty-five years of age, and might still learn. That was Thérèse's opinion, who also saw an opportunity for him to increase his pecuniary

resources. If he would have condescended to copy a Titian,—who was his favorite among the masters,—there was no doubt that the same dealer who had commissioned Thérèse would have bought it or found a purchaser for it. Laurent considered that an absurd idea. So long as he had money in his pocket, he could not conceive how one could descend from the lofty realms of art so far as to think of gain. He left Thérèse absorbed in contemplation of her model, joking her a little in anticipation on the Van Dyck she was going to paint, and trying to dishearten her with the terrible task she had the courage to undertake. Then he roamed about the city, sorely perplexed as to how he should employ the six weeks which Thérèse had asked for the completion of her work.

Certainly, she had no time to spare with the short, dark, December days, and facilities for working not to be compared with those of her own studio in Paris: a wretched light, an enormous room heated very slightly or not at all, and swarms of chattering tourists who, on the pretext of looking at her work, planted themselves in front of her, or annoyed her with their absurd or impertinent reflections. Ill with a severe cold, depressed, and, above all, alarmed by the traces of ennui which she spied in Laurent's eyes, she returned to their apartments at night to find him out of temper, or to wait for him until hunger drove him home. Two days did not pass without his reproaching her for having accepted a degrading task, and urging her to abandon it. Had not he money enough for both, and why should his mistress refuse to share it with him?

Thérèse held firm; she knew that money would not last in Laurent's hands, and that he very likely would not have enough to return home when he was tired of Italy. She begged him to let her work, and to work

himself according to his own ideas, but as every artist can and should work when he has his future to build.

He agreed that she was right, and resolved to set to work. He unpacked his boxes, found a studio, and made several sketches; but, whether because of the change of air and of habits, or because of the too recent sight of so many chefs-d'œuvres which had moved him deeply and which he required time to digest, he was conscious of a temporary impotence, and fell into one of those fits of the blues which he could not throw off alone. It would have required some excitement coming from without, superb music descending from the ceiling, an Arabian steed coming through the key-hole, an unfamiliar literary masterpiece at his hand, or, still better, a naval engagement in the harbor of Genoa, an earthquake, or any other exciting event, pleasurable or terrible, which would take him out of himself, and under the spell of which he would feel lifted up and revived.

Suddenly, amid his vague and confused aspirations, an evil idea sought him out in spite of himself.

"When I think," he reflected, "that *formerly*" (that was the way he referred to the time when he did not love Thérèse) "the slightest pleasure was enough to restore me to life! I have to-day many things of which I used to dream—money, that is to say, six months of leisure and liberty, Italy under my feet, the sea at my door, a mistress as loving as a mother, and at the same time a serious and intelligent friend; and all these are not enough to rekindle my energy! Whose fault is it? Not mine, surely. I was not spoiled, and formerly it did not require so much to divert me. When I think that the lightest wine used to go to my head as quickly as the most generous vintage; that any saucy minx, with a provoking glance and a problematical costume, was enough to raise

my spirits and to persuade me that such a conquest made me like one of the heroes of the Regency! Did I need an ideal creature like Thérèse? How in the devil did I ever persuade myself that both moral and physical beauty were necessary to me in love? I used to be able to content myself with the *least*; therefore the *most* was certain to crush me, since better is the enemy of good. And then, too, is there such a thing as true beauty to the passions? The true is that which pleases. That with which one is sated is as if it had never been. And then there is the pleasure of changing, and therein, perhaps, lies the whole secret of life. To change is to renew one's self; to be able to change is to be free. Is the artist born to be a slave, and is it not slavery to remain faithful, or simply to pledge one's faith?"

Laurent allowed himself to be persuaded by these old sophistries, always new to minds that are adrift. He soon felt that he must express them to some one, and that some one was Thérèse. So much the worse for her, since Laurent saw no one else.

The evening conversation always began in about the same way:

"What a frightfully stupid place this is!"

One evening, he added:

"It must be a ghastly bore to be in a picture. I shouldn't like to be that model you are copying. That poor lovely countess in the black and gold dress, who has been hanging there two hundred years, must have damned herself in heaven—if her soft eyes didn't damn her here—to see her image buried in this dismal country."

"And yet," Thérèse replied, "she still has the privilege of beauty, the triumph which survives death and which the hand of a master perpetuates. Although she has crumbled to dust in her grave, she still has lovers;

every day I see young men, utterly insensible to the merits of the painting, stand in ecstatic contemplation before that beauty which seems to breathe and smile with triumphant tranquillity."

"She resembles you, Thérèse, do you know it? She has a little of the sphinx, and I am not surprised at your admiration of her mysterious smile. They say that artists always create after their own nature; it was perfectly natural that you should select Van Dyck's portraits for your apprenticeship. He made women tall and slender and elegant and proud, like your figure."

"You have reached the stage of compliment! Stop there, for I know that mockery will come next."

"No, I am in no mood for jesting. You know well enough that I no longer jest. With you one must take everything seriously, and I follow the prescription. I simply have one depressing remark to make. It is that your dead and gone countess must be tired of being beautiful always in the same way.—An idea, Thérèse! a fantastic vision suggested by what you said just now. Listen.

"A young man, who presumably had some idea of sculpture, conceived a passion for a marble statue on a tomb. He went mad over it, and one day the poor devil raised the stone to see what was left of that lovely creature in the sarcophagus. He found there—what he was certain to find there, the idiot!—a mummy! Thereupon, his reason returned, and he kissed the mummy, saying: 'I love you better so; at least, you are something that has lived, while I was enamored of a stone that has never been aware of its own existence.'"

"I don't understand," said Thérèse.

"Nor do I; but it may be that in love the statue is what one builds in his head, and the mummy what he takes into his heart."

They had reached that point. To no purpose did Laurent melt with her tears and beg her pardon for having caused them to flow: the trouble broke out afresh the next day.

"What do you suppose will become of me in this detestable city?" he said to her. "You want me to work; I have tried it and I can't do it. I was not born like you, with a little steel spring in my brain, so that I have only to press the button to set the will at work. I am a creator! Great or small, weak or powerful, a creator is a machine which obeys nobody and which God sets in motion, when it seems good to Him, with His breath or with the passing breeze. I am incapable of doing anything whatsoever when I am bored, or when I do not like my surroundings."

"How is it possible for an intellectual man to be bored," said Thérèse, "unless he is in a dungeon, deprived of light and air? Are there no beautiful things to see in this city which enchanted you so the first day, no interesting excursions to take in the neighborhood, no good book to consult, no intelligent people to talk with?"

"I have been buried in beautiful things up to my eyes; I don't like to drive alone; the best books irritate me when they tell me what I am not in the mood to believe. As for making acquaintances—I have letters of recommendation which you know very well that I can't use!"

"No, I don't know it; why not?"

"Because my friends in society naturally gave me letters to society people here; but society people don't live shut up within four walls, without ever thinking of amusing themselves; and as you are not in society, Thérèse, you can't go with me, so I should have to go alone!"

"Why not in the day-time, as I have to work all day in that old palace?"

She was unwilling to descend with him from the heights of the empyrean. A hasty word seemed to her an insult, a trivial reminiscence incurred her censure. She was sober in everything, and had no comprehension of capricious appetites, of extravagant fancies. She was the better of the two, unquestionably, and if compliments were what she must have, he was ready with them; but was it a matter of compliments between them? Was not the important thing to devise some means of living together? Formerly, she was more cheerfully inclined, she had been *coquettish* with him, and she was no longer willing to be; now, she was like a sick bird on its perch, with feathers ruffled, head between its shoulders, and lifeless eye. Her pale, dismal face was enough to frighten one sometimes. In that huge, dark room, made depressing by the remains of former splendor, she produced the effect of a ghost upon him. At times, he was really afraid of her. Could she not fill that gloomy void with strange songs and joyous peals of laughter?

"Come; what shall we do to shake off this deathly chill that freezes one's shoulders? Sit down at the piano and play me a waltz. I will waltz all by myself. Do you know how to waltz? I'll wager that you don't. You don't know anything that isn't lugubrious!"

"Come," said Thérèse, rising, "let us leave this place at once, let come what may! You will go mad here. It may be worse elsewhere; but I will go through with my task to the end."

At that, Laurent lost his temper. So it was a task that she had imposed on herself? So she was simply performing a duty in cold blood? Perhaps she had taken a vow to the Virgin to consecrate her lover to her! All that she lacked now was to turn nun!

He took his hat with that air of supreme disdain and

Their thoughts were diverted by a surprise. Monsieur Palmer, who had arrived in Genoa that morning, came to ask them to dine with him. Laurent was enchanted by this diversion. Although he was always cold in his manners toward other men, he leaped on the American's neck, saying that he was sent by Heaven. Palmer was more surprised than flattered by this cordial welcome. A single glance at Thérèse had sufficed to show him that it was not the effusion of happiness. However, Laurent said nothing of his ennui, and Thérèse was surprised to hear him praise the city and the country. He even declared that the women were charming. How did he know them?

At eight o'clock, he called for his overcoat and went out. Palmer would have taken his leave at the same time.

"Why don't you stay a little longer with Thérèse?" said Laurent. "It will please her. We are altogether alone here. I am going out for an hour. Wait till I return before you have your tea."

At eleven, Laurent had not returned. Thérèse was very much depressed. She made vain efforts to conceal her despair. She was no longer anxious simply, she felt that she was lost. Palmer saw it all, and pretended to see nothing; he talked constantly to her to try to distract her thoughts; but, as Laurent did not come, and it was not proper to wait for him after midnight, he took his leave after pressing Thérèse's hand. Involuntarily he told her by that pressure that he was not deceived by her courage, and that he realized the extent of her disaster.

Laurent arrived at that moment, and saw Thérèse's emotion. He was no sooner alone with her, than he began to jest with her in a tone which affected not to descend to jealousy.

"Come," said she, "do not impose unnecessary pain upon me. Do you think that Palmer is paying court to me? Let us go, I have already suggested it."

"No, my dear, I am not so absurd as that. Now that you have somebody for company, and allow me to go out a little on my own account, everything is all right, and I feel just in the mood to work."

"God grant it!" said Thérèse. "I will do whatever you wish; but, if you rejoice because I have somebody to talk with, have the good taste not to refer to it as you did just now; for I cannot stand it."

"What the devil are you angry about now? what did I say that hurt you so, pray tell me? You are becoming far too sensitive and suspicious, my dear friend! What harm would be done if the excellent Palmer should fall in love with you?"

"It would be very wrong in you to leave me alone with him, if you think what you say."

"Ah! it would be wrong—to expose you to danger? You see that there is danger, according to your own story, and that I was not mistaken!"

"Very good! then let us pass our evenings together and receive no one. I am perfectly content. Is it a bargain?"

"You are very good, my dear Thérèse. Forgive me. I will stay with you, and we will see whomever you choose; that will be the best and pleasantest arrangement."

In truth, Laurent seemed to have come to his senses. He began a serious study in his studio, and invited Thérèse to come to see it. Several days passed without a storm. Palmer had not reappeared. But Laurent soon wearied of that regular life and went in search of him, reproaching him for his desertion of his friends. No

sooner did he come to pass the evening with them than Laurent invented a pretext for going out, and remained away until midnight.

One week passed in this way, then another. Laurent gave Thérèse one evening out of three or four, and such an evening! she would have preferred solitude.

Where did he go? She never knew. He did not appear in society: the damp, cold weather precluded the idea that he went on the water for pleasure. However, he often said that he had been on a boat, and his clothes smelt of tar. He was learning to row, taking lessons of a fisherman in the harbor. He pretended that the fatigue calmed the excitement of his nerves, and put him in good condition for the next day's labor. Thérèse no longer dared to go to his studio. He seemed annoyed when she expressed a wish to see his work. He did not want her reflections when he was working out his own idea, nor did he wish to have her come there and say nothing, which would make him feel as if she were inclined to find fault. She was not to see his work until he deemed it worthy to be seen. Formerly, he never began anything without explaining his idea to her; now, he treated her like *the public*.

Two or three times he passed the whole night abroad. Thérèse did not become accustomed to the anxiety these prolonged absences caused her. She would have exasperated him by giving any sign that she noticed them; but, as may be imagined, she watched him and tried to learn the truth. It was impossible for her to follow him herself at night in a city full of sailors and adventurers of all nations. Not for anything in the world would she have stooped to have him followed by any one. She stole noiselessly into his room and looked at him as he lay asleep. He seemed utterly exhausted. Perhaps he had,

schemer; I give myself, heart and soul, without reservation: that is why I resume possession of myself in the same way. My moral liberty is a sacred thing, and I allow no one to seize it. I simply entrusted it, not gave it to you; it was for you to make a good use of it and to succeed in making me happy. Oh! do not try to say that you did not want me! I know all about these tricks of modesty and these evolutions of the female conscience. On the day that you yielded to me, I realized that you thought you had conquered me, and that all that feigned resistance, those tears of distress, and that constant pardoning of my temerity were simply the old commonplace way of throwing a line, and luring the poor fish, dazzled by the artificial fly, to nibble at the hook. I deceived you, Thérèse, by pretending to be deceived by that fly; it was my privilege. You wished adoration: I lavished it upon you without effort and without hypocrisy; you are beautiful, and I desired you! But a woman is only a woman, and the lowest of them all affords us as much pleasure as the greatest queen. You were simple enough not to know it, and now you must depend upon yourself. You must understand that monotony does not suit me, you must leave me to my instincts, which are not always sublime, but which I cannot destroy without destroying myself with them. Where is the harm, and why should we tear our hair? We have been partners, and we separate, that is the whole of it. There is no need of our hating and abusing each other just for that. Avenge yourself by granting the prayers of the excellent Palmer, who is languishing for love of you; I shall rejoice in his joy, and we three will continue to be the best friends in the world. You will recover your charms of other days, which you have lost, and the brilliancy of your lovely eyes, which are growing haggard and dull by dint of

believed them at the moment, or, rather, he spoke without heeding what he said. He remembered nothing of it after sleeping upon it, and if he had been reminded of it, would have denied every word.

But one fact was undeniably true, that he was weary, for the moment, of dignified love, and craved, with his whole heart, the degrading excitements of the past. It was his punishment for following the evil path he had chosen early in life,—a very harsh punishment, no doubt, of which we can readily imagine that he complained bitterly, since he had not sinned with premeditation, but had plunged laughingly into an abyss from which he supposed that he could easily escape when he chose. But love is regulated by a code which seems to rest, like all social codes, upon that terrible formula: *No one is supposed to be ignorant of the law!* So much the worse for those who are ignorant of it! Let the child go within reach of the claws of the panther, thinking to pat it: the panther will make no allowance for such ignorance; it will devour the child because it is not in its nature to spare him. And so with poison, with the lightning and with vice, blind agents of the fatal law which man must study, or take the consequences.

On the morrow of that explosion, naught remained in Laurent's memory save a vague idea that he had had a decisive explanation with Thérèse, and that she had seemed resigned.

"Perhaps everything is for the best," he thought, finding her as calm as when he had parted from her.

And yet he was terrified by her pallor.

"That is nothing," she said, tranquilly; "this cold tires me a good deal, but it is nothing more than a cold. It will have to run its course."

"Well, Thérèse," he said, "what is the present state

of our relations? Have you reflected? It is for you to decide. Are we to part in anger, or remain on the footing of friendship as *formerly*?"

"I am not angry," she replied; "let us remain friends. Remain here, if you please. I propose to finish my work and return to France in about a fortnight."

"But should I not go and live in some other house for the next fortnight? aren't you afraid that people will talk?"

"Do whatever you think best. We have our own apartments here, entirely independent of each other; we use nothing but the salon in common; I have no use for it, and I give it up to you."

"No: on the other hand, I beg you to keep it. You will not hear me go out and come in; I will never put my foot inside it if you forbid me."

"I forbid you nothing," replied Thérèse, "unless it be to think for a single instant that your mistress can forgive you. As for your friend, she is superior to a certain order of disappointment. She hopes that she can still be useful to you, and you will always find her when you need any proof of friendship."

She offered him her hand, and went away to her work.

Laurent did not understand her. Such perfect self-control was something which he could not comprehend, unfamiliar as he was with passive courage and silent resolution. He believed that she expected to resume her influence over him, and that she proposed to bring him back to love through friendship. He promised to yield to no attack of weakness, and, in order to be more certain of himself, he resolved to call some one to witness the fact of the rupture. He went to Palmer, confided to him the wretched story of his love, and added:

"If you love Thérèse, as I think you do, my dear

friend, make Thérèse love you. I cannot be jealous of you, far from it. As I have made her unhappy enough, and as I am convinced that you will be exceedingly kind to her, you will relieve me of a subject of remorse which I am most anxious not to retain."

Laurent was surprised that Palmer made no reply.

"Do I offend you by speaking as I do?" he said. "Such is not my purpose. I entertain friendship and esteem for you, yes, and respect, if you choose. If you blame my conduct in this matter, tell me so; that will be preferable to this air of indifference or disdain."

"I am indifferent neither to Thérèse's sorrows nor to yours," replied Palmer. "But I spare you advice or reproaches which come too late. I believed that you were made for each other; I am persuaded, now, that the greatest, yes, the only happiness that you can confer upon each other is to part. As to my personal feelings for Thérèse, I do not admit your right to question me, and as for those sentiments which, in your judgment, I might succeed in arousing in her, you no longer have the right, after what you have said, to express such a supposition in my presence, much less in hers."

"That is true," rejoined Laurent, nonchalantly, "and I understand very well what it means. I see that I shall be in the way here now, and I think that I shall do as well to leave Genoa, in order not to embarrass any one."

He did, in fact, carry out his threat, after a very cold farewell to Thérèse, and went straight to Florence, with the intention of plunging into society or work, according to his caprice. It was exceedingly pleasant to him to say to himself:

"I will do whatever comes into my head, and there will be no one to suffer and be anxious about me. It is the worst of tortures, when a man is no more evilly disposed

than I am, to have a victim constantly before one's eyes. Come, I am free at last, and the evil that I may do will fall on myself alone!"

Doubtless, Thérèse was wrong not to let him see the depth of the wound he had inflicted on her. She was too brave and too proud. Since she had undertaken the cure of a desperately diseased nature, she should not have recoiled from heroic remedies and painful operations. She should have made that frenzied heart bleed freely, have overwhelmed him with reproaches, and repaid insult with insult and stab with stab. If he had seen the suffering he had caused, perhaps Laurent would have done justice to himself. Perhaps shame and repentance would have saved his soul from the crime of murdering love in cold blood.

But, after three months of fruitless efforts, Thérèse was disheartened. Did she owe such absolute devotion to a man whom she had never desired to enslave, who had forced himself upon her despite her grief and her melancholy forebodings, who had clung to her steps like an abandoned child, and had cried to her: "Take me under your wing, protect me, or I shall die here by the roadside!"

And now that child cursed her for yielding to his outcries and his tears. He accused her of having taken advantage of his weakness to deprive him of the joys of liberty. He turned his back upon her, drawing a long breath, and exclaiming: "At last, at last!"

"Since he is incurable," she thought, "what is the use of making him suffer? Have I not proved that I could do nothing? Has he not told me, and, alas! almost proved it to me, that I was stifling his genius by seeking to cure his fever? When I thought that I had succeeded in disgusting him with dissipation, did I not discover that

he was more greedy of it than ever? When I said to him: 'Go back into the world,' he dreaded my jealousy, and plunged into mysterious and degrading debauchery; he returned home drunk, with torn clothes, and blood on his face!"

On the day of Laurent's departure, Palmer asked Thérèse:

"Well, my friend, what do you propose to do? Shall I go after him?"

"No, certainly not!" she replied.

"Perhaps I could bring him back."

"I should be in despair if you did."

"Then you no longer love him?"

"No, not in the least."

There was a pause, after which Palmer continued in a thoughtful tone:

"Thérèse, I have some very important news for you. I hesitate, because I fear to cause you additional emotion, and you are hardly in condition——"

"I beg your pardon, my friend. I am horribly depressed, but I am absolutely calm, and prepared for anything."

"Very well, Thérèse; in that case, I will tell you that you are free: the Comte de —— is no more."

"I know it," replied Thérèse. "I have known it a week."

"And you haven't told Laurent?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because some sort of reaction would have taken place in him instantly. You know how anything unexpected upsets and excites him. One of two things would have happened: either he would have imagined that my purpose in informing him of the change in my position

was to induce him to marry me, and the horror of being bound to me would have intensified his aversion, or he would have turned suddenly, of his own motion, to the idea of marriage, in one of those paroxysms of devotion which sometimes seize him and which last—just a quarter of an hour, to be succeeded by profound despair or frantic wrath. The unfortunate creature is guilty enough toward me; it was not necessary to offer fresh bait to his caprice, and an additional motive for him to perjure himself.”

“Then you no longer esteem him?”

“I do not say that, my dear Palmer. I pity him, and do not accuse him. Perhaps some other woman will make him happy and good. I have been unable to do either. It is probably as much my fault as his. However that may be, it is proved to my satisfaction that we never should have loved each other, and that we should not make any further effort to do so.”

“And now, Thérèse, will you not think of taking advantage of the liberty you have recovered?”

“What advantage can I take of it?”

“You can marry again, and become acquainted with the joys of a happy home.”

“My dear Dick, I have loved twice in my life, and you see where I am now. It is not in my destiny to be happy. It is too late to seek what has thus far eluded me. I am thirty years old.”

“It is just because you are thirty years old that you cannot do without love. You have undergone the enthusiasm of passion, and that is just the age at which women cannot escape it. It is because you have suffered, because you have been inadequately loved, that the inextinguishable thirst for happiness is bound to awake in you, and, it may be, to lead you from disappointment to

disappointment, into deeper abysses than that from which you are now emerging."

"I trust not."

"Yes, of course, you trust not; but you are mistaken, Thérèse; everything is to be feared from your time of life, your overstrained sensitiveness and the deceitful tranquillity due to a moment of weariness and prostration. Love will seek you out, do not doubt it, and you will be pursued and beset the moment that you have recovered your liberty. Formerly, your isolation held in abeyance the hopes of those who surrounded you; but now that Laurent has lowered you in their esteem, all those who claimed to be your friends will seek to be your lovers. You will inspire violent passions, and some there will be sufficiently clever to persuade you. In a word——"

"In a word, Palmer, you consider me lost because I am unhappy! That is very cruel of you, and you make me feel very keenly how debased I am!"

Thérèse put her hands over her face, and wept bitterly.

Palmer let her weep on; seeing that tears would be beneficial to her, he had purposely provoked that outburst. When he saw that she was calmer, he knelt before her.

"Thérèse," he said, "I have caused you bitter pain, but you must give me credit for kindly intentions. I love you, Thérèse, I have always loved you, not with a blind passion, but with all the faith and all the devotion of which I am capable. I can see more plainly than ever that in your case a noble life has been ruined and shattered by the fault of others. You are, in truth, debased in the eyes of the world, but not in mine. On the contrary, your love for Laurent has proved to me that you

she must stamp out herself. She felt that Palmer spoke the truth, but she felt also that he proposed to assume a terrible task.

"No," she said, "I am not afraid of myself. I do not love Laurent, and I can never love him again; but what about society, your mother, your country, your social standing, the honor of your name? I am debased, as you have said; I am conscious of it. Ah! Palmer, do not urge me so! I am too dismayed by the thought of what you will have to defy for my sake!"

On the next day, and every day thereafter, Palmer pressed his suit vigorously. He gave Thérèse no time to breathe. He was alone with her from morning till night, and redoubled the force of his will to persuade her. Palmer was a man of heart and of impulse; we shall see later whether Thérèse was justified in hesitating. What disturbed her was the precipitation with which Palmer acted, and sought to force her to act by pledging herself to him by a promise.

"You are afraid of my reflections," she said; "therefore you have not so much confidence in me as you boast of having."

"I believe in your word," he replied. "Do I not prove that by asking you for it? But I am not obliged to believe that you love me, for you give me no answer on that point, and you are right. You do not know as yet what name to give to your friendly feeling. For my own part, I know that what I feel is love, and I am not one of those who hesitate to read their own hearts. Love with me is very logical. It fervently craves its object. Therefore it seeks to avoid the ill-fortune to which you may expose it by indulging in reflections or reveries, wherein, mentally diseased as you are, you may not distinguish your real interests."

Thérèse felt almost hurt when Palmer spoke of her interests. He seemed to her altogether too self-sacrificing, and she could not bear to have him think her capable of accepting so much from him without seeking to reciprocate. She suddenly felt ashamed of herself in that contest of generosity in which Palmer placed himself absolutely at her discretion, demanding only that she should accept his name, his fortune, his protection, and the affection of his whole life. He gave everything, and, as his only recompense, begged her to think of herself.

Thereupon, hope returned to Thérèse's heart. This man, whom she had always considered a practical, matter-of-fact mortal, and who still artlessly affected that character, revealed himself to her in so utterly unexpected a light, that her mind was vividly impressed, and as it were, revived, in the midst of its death-agony. It was like a ray of sunlight bursting in upon darkness which she thought was destined to be everlasting. At the very moment when, rendered unjust by her despair, she was on the point of cursing love, he forced her to believe in love, and to look upon her misfortune as an accident for which Heaven was prepared to compensate her. Palmer, who was a handsome man of a cold and regular type of beauty, became more and more transfigured every moment in the astonished, uncertain, melting eyes of the woman he loved. His shyness, which imparted to his first advances a touch of roughness, gave place to effusive warmth, and, although he expressed himself less poetically than Laurent, he was none the less persuasive on that account.

Thérèse discovered genuine enthusiasm beneath that somewhat rough shell of obstinacy, and she could not refrain from smiling with emotion when she saw the

vehemence with which he *coolly* pursued his project of saving her. She felt deeply touched, and allowed him to extort the promise he demanded.

Suddenly she received a letter in a handwriting that she did not recognize, it was so changed. Indeed, she had difficulty in deciphering the signature. She succeeded, however, with Palmer's help, in reading these words:

"I have played and lost; I had a mistress, she deceived me, and I killed her. I have taken poison. I am dying. Adieu, Thérèse.

"LAURENT."

"Let us go!" said Palmer.

"Ah! my friend, I do love you!" cried Thérèse, throwing her arms about his neck. "I realize now how well you deserve to be loved."

They started instantly. In one night they reached Livorno by water, and were at Florence that evening. They found Laurent at an inn, not dying, but suffering from an attack of brain fever of such violence that four men could hardly hold him. When he saw Thérèse, he recognized her and clung to her, crying that they intended to bury him alive. He held her so tightly that she fell to the floor, suffocated. Palmer had to carry her from the room in a swoon; but she came to herself in a moment; and, with a courage and perseverance bordering on the marvellous, she passed twenty days and nights at the bedside of that man whom she no longer loved. He recognized her only to heap the grossest insults upon her, and, as soon as she left him for an instant, he recalled her, saying that without her he should die.

Luckily, he had not killed any woman, nor taken any poison, nor, in all probability, lost his money at play, nor

done anything of what he had written to Thérèse under the influence of delirium and disease. He never mentioned that letter, which she dared not mention to him; he was terrified enough by the derangement of his mind when he became conscious that it had been deranged. He had many other bad dreams while his fever lasted. Sometimes he imagined that Thérèse was administering poison to him, sometimes that Palmer was putting fetters on him. The most frequent and most agonizing of his hallucinations was one in which he saw Thérèse take a long gold pin from her hair and force it slowly into his skull. She had such a pin with which she kept her hair in place in the Italian fashion. She ceased to wear it, but he still saw and felt it.

As her presence seemed, as a general rule, to excite him, Thérèse usually stationed herself behind his bed, with the curtain between them; but, as soon as there was occasion to give him any medicine, he would lose his temper, and declare that he would take nothing from any hand but Thérèse's.

"She alone has the right to kill me," he would say; "I have injured her so deeply! She hates me, let her take her revenge! Don't I see her every moment, at the foot of my bed, in her new lover's arms? Come, Thérèse, come, I say; I am thirsty; pour out the poison for me."

Thérèse would, thereupon, pour out for him tranquillity and slumber. After several days of continued frantic excitement, which the doctors thought that he could not endure, and which they took note of as an abnormal fact, Laurent suddenly became calm and lay inert, prostrated, in a sort of stupor, but saved.

He was so weak that they had to feed him, without his knowledge, and in such infinitesimal quantities in

order to relieve his stomach of all labor of digestion, that Thérèse felt that she ought not to leave him for an instant. Palmer tried to induce her to take some rest by giving her his word of honor to take her place by the invalid's side; but she refused, feeling that no human power was secure against the surprise of sleep, and that, since by a sort of miracle she was always on the alert when the time came to put the spoon to the patient's lips, and was never overcome by fatigue, God had entrusted to her, and to no other, the duty of saving that fragile existence.

And so it was, in truth, and she saved him.

If medical science, however enlightened it may be, proves inadequate in desperate cases, it is very often because it is impossible to carry out the treatment with absolute exactness. No one knows what disturbance a moment of craving or a moment of surfeit may cause in a life that is trembling in the balance; and the miracle lacking to save the dying man is often nothing more than placidity, persistence, and punctuality on the part of his nurses.

At last, Laurent awoke one morning as if from a lethargic sleep, seemed surprised to see Thérèse at his right and Palmer at his left, offered each of them a hand, and asked them where he was and how he came there.

They deceived him a long while as to the length and severity of his illness, for he was deeply distressed when he saw how weak and emaciated he was. The first time that he looked in the glass he was frightened by his own image. In the early days of his convalescence he asked for Thérèse. He was told that she was asleep. He was greatly surprised.

"So she has become a genuine Italian woman, has she," he said, "that she sleeps in the day-time?"

"Why, where are we going, Thérèse? Aren't we comfortable here?"

She was obliged to explain, for he insisted.

"My child," said Thérèse, "you are to remain here; the doctors say that you need another week or two of perfect quiet before you can travel at all without danger of a relapse. I am going back to France, as I have finished my work at Genoa, and I do not intend, at present, to visit other parts of Italy."

"Very good, Thérèse, you are free; but if you choose to return to France, I am at liberty to make the same choice. Can't you wait a week for me? I am sure that I shall need no more than that to be in condition to travel."

He was so sincere in his forgetfulness of the wrong he had done her, and he was so like a child at that moment, that Thérèse had to force back the tears that came to her eyes at the memory of that species of adoption, formerly so sweet, which she was forced to resign.

She began involuntarily to use the familiar form of address, and said to him, with the utmost gentleness and delicacy, that they must part for some time.

"Why part, in Heaven's name?" cried Laurent; "do we no longer love each other?"

"That would be impossible," she replied; "we shall always be friends; but we have mutually caused each other a great deal of suffering, and your health could not endure any more of it. We will wait until time enough has elapsed for everything to be forgotten."

"But I have forgotten!" cried Laurent, with an earnestness that was touching because it was so absolutely ingenuous. "I remember none of the wrong you did me! You were always an angel to me, and, being an angel, you cannot harbor resentment. You must forgive

me for everything, and take me away with you, Thérèse! If you leave me here, I shall die of ennui!"

And as Thérèse displayed a firmness that he did not expect, he lost his temper and told her that she did very wrong to feign a severity to which her whole conduct gave the lie.

"I understand perfectly well what you want," he said. "You demand that I repent, and atone for my wrongdoing. Well, don't you see that I abhor the thought of it, and have I not expiated it sufficiently by going mad for eight or ten days? You desire tears and oaths as formerly? What is the use? you would not believe in them again. My future conduct is what is to be judged, and you see that I am not afraid of the future, since I cling to you. You see, my dear Thérèse, you are a child, too, and you know I often called you one when I saw you pretending to sulk. Do you think you can persuade me that you no longer love me, when you have just passed a whole month shut up here, and for twenty days and nights of that month did not go to bed and hardly left my room? Can't I see, from the dark rings about your lovely eyes, that you would have died at the task if it had been necessary? A woman doesn't do such things as that for a man she no longer loves!"

Thérèse dared not utter the fatal words. She hoped that Palmer would come and interrupt the tête-à-tête, and that she could avoid a scene that might result seriously for the convalescent. But it was impossible; he placed himself in front of the door to prevent her from going out, dropped at her feet, and grovelled there in despair.

"Great God!" she exclaimed, "is it possible that you think me cruel enough, capricious enough, to refuse to say a word that I could say to you? But I cannot say

that one because it would not be the truth. Love is at an end between us."

Laurent rose in a passion. He could not understand that perhaps he had killed that love in which he had pretended not to believe.

"Is it Palmer?" he cried, smashing a tea-pot, from which he had mechanically poured himself a draught; "it is he, is it? Tell me, I insist upon it, I insist upon the truth! It will kill me, I know, but I don't choose to be deceived!"

"Deceived!" echoed Thérèse, taking his hands to prevent him from tearing them with his nails; "deceived! what sort of a word is that for you to use? Do I belong to you, pray? have we not been strangers to each other since the first night you passed away from home at Genoa, after telling me that I was your torment and your executioner? wasn't that four months ago and more? and do you think that length of time, without an indication of change on your part, was not enough to make me mistress of myself once more?"

And as she saw that Laurent, instead of being exasperated by her frankness, grew calmer, and listened with eager interest, she continued:

"If you do not understand the feeling that brought me to your sick-bed, and that has kept me beside you until to-day, to complete your cure by a mother's care, it is because you never understood my heart. This heart, Laurent," she said, putting her hand to her breast, "may be neither so proud nor so ardent as yours; but, as you yourself used often to say, it always remains in the same place. What it has loved it cannot cease to love; but, do not mistake my meaning, it is not love as you understand the word, it is not such love as you once aroused in me and as you are mad enough to expect again.

Neither my passions nor my reason belong to you now. I have resumed possession of my body and my will; my confidence and my enthusiastic regard can never be restored to you. I am at liberty to bestow them upon whoever may deserve them, upon Palmer, if I choose, and you have no right to object, you who went to him one morning and said:

“‘Pray go and console Thérèse; you will do me a favor.’”

“That is true! that is true!” cried Laurent, clasping his trembling hands; “I did say that! I had forgotten it, but I remember it now!”

“Do not forget it again,” said Thérèse, who resumed a gentler tone when she saw that he was calmer, “and understand, my poor child, that love is too delicate a flower to rise again when one has trampled it under foot. Think no more of it in connection with me, seek it elsewhere, if this sad experience you have had of it opens your eyes and modifies your character. You will find it on the day that you are worthy of it. As for myself, I could no longer endure your caresses, I should be degraded by them; but my sisterly and motherly affection will remain yours in spite of yourself and in spite of everything. That is something different, it is pity; I do not conceal the fact, but I tell you frankly, so that you may think no more of winning again a love by which you as well as myself would be humiliated. If you wish that this friendship, which seems an insult to you now, should become agreeable to you, you have only to deserve it. Hitherto you have had no opportunity. Now the opportunity is at hand; make the most of it, part with me without weakness or bitterness. Show me the calm, sympathetic face of a man of heart, instead of this face of a child who weeps without knowing why.”

"Let me weep, Thérèse," said Laurent, kneeling at her feet, "let me wash away my sin with my tears; let me kneel in adoration of this saintly compassion which has survived shattered love in your heart. It does not humiliate me, as you think; I feel that I shall become worthy of it. Do not ask me to be calm, you know well enough that I cannot be; but believe that I may possibly become good. Ah! Thérèse, I know you too late! Why did you not speak to me sooner as you have just spoken? Why did you overwhelm me with your kindness and devotion, sweet Sister of Charity who cannot restore my happiness? But you are right, Thérèse; I deserved what has happened to me, and you have made me understand it at last. The lesson will benefit me, I promise you, and if I am ever able to love another woman, I shall know how to love. So I shall owe everything to you, my sister, past and future alike!"

Laurent was still talking effusively when Palmer entered. Laurent threw himself on his neck, calling him his brother and his savior, and exclaimed, pointing to Thérèse:

"Ah! my friend! you remember what you said to me at the Hôtel Meurice the last time we met in Paris: 'If you are not sure that you will not make her suffer, blow out your brains to-night rather than return to her'?—I ought to have done it, but I did not! And now, look at her, she is more changed than I am, poor Thérèse! She was thrown down and trampled on, and yet she came and tore me from the clutches of death, when she might well have cursed me and abandoned me!"

Laurent's penitence was genuine; Palmer was deeply moved by it. As the artist worked himself up, he expressed himself with persuasive eloquence, and when Palmer was alone with Thérèse, he said to her:

"Do not think, my dear, that I suffered on account of your solicitude for him, I understood perfectly! You wished to cure his body and his heart. You have won the victory. Your poor child is saved! Now what do you propose to do?"

"Leave him forever," she replied, "or, at all events, not see him again for years to come. If he returns to France, I remain in Italy, and if he remains in Italy, I return to France. Have I not told you that that was my resolution? It was because my mind was so thoroughly made up that I postponed the moment of parting. I knew that there must inevitably be an outbreak, and I did not wish to leave him while it lasted, if it should prove to be serious."

"Have you reflected seriously, Thérèse?" said Palmer, thoughtfully. "Are you quite sure of not weakening at the last moment?"

"I am perfectly sure."

"That man seems to me irresistible in grief. He would extort pity from the bowels of a stone, and yet, Thérèse, if you yield to him, you are lost, and he with you. If you still love him, reflect that you can save him only by leaving him!"

"I know it," replied Thérèse; "but why do you say that, my friend? Are you ill, too? Have you forgotten that my word is pledged to you?"

Palmer kissed her hand and smiled. Peace re-entered his soul.

On the next day, Laurent came and told them that he intended to go to Switzerland to complete his cure. The climate of Italy did not agree with him: that was the truth. The physicians advised him not to wait until the extremely hot weather.

It was definitely decided that they should part at Florence. Thérèse had no other plans than to go where

Laurent did not go; but, when she saw how exhausted he was by the emotion of the preceding day, she had to promise him to pass another week at Florence, in order to prevent him from going away before he regained the necessary strength.

That week was, perhaps, the best in Laurent's whole life. Generous, trustful, cordial, and sincere, he had entered upon a frame of mind which he had never before known, even during the first week of his union with Thérèse. Affection had penetrated him, invaded him, vanquished him. He would not leave his two friends, but drove with them to the *Cascines*, at the hours when there was no crowd there, ate with them, took a childish delight in going to dine with them in the country, when Thérèse would take his arm and Palmer's alternately, tried his strength by fencing a little with the latter, accompanied them to the theatre, and made *Dick the great tourist* trace the itinerary of his trip to Switzerland. It was a very important question whether he should go by Milan or Genoa. He decided at last on the latter route, intending to go by Pisa and Lucca, thence along the shore, by land or water, according as he should feel stronger or weaker after the first few days of travelling.

The day appointed for his departure arrived. Laurent had made all his preparations with melancholy gaiety. Brimming over with jests concerning his costume, concerning his luggage, concerning the mongrel aspect he would present in a certain waterproof cloak, then a great novelty, which Palmer had compelled him to accept, and concerning the barbarous French of an Italian servant whom Palmer had selected for him, and who was the best fellow in the world; accepting gratefully and humbly all Thérèse's injunctions and attentions, he had tears in his eyes, while he laughed most heartily.

On the night preceding this last day, he had a slight attack of fever. He jested about it. The carriage in which he was to travel by slow stages, was at the door. It was a cool morning. Thérèse was anxious.

"Go with him as far as Spezzia," Palmer said to her. "That is where he is to take the boat, if he doesn't stand the carriage journey well. I will join you there the day after he has left. Some very urgent business will detain me here twenty-four hours."

Thérèse, surprised by this suggestion, refused to go with Laurent.

"I beg you to do it," said Palmer, with much earnestness; "it is impossible for me to go with you!"

"Very good, my dear, but it is not necessary for me to go with him."

"Yes, it is," he replied; "you must go."

Thérèse fancied that she understood: that Palmer deemed this final test necessary. She was surprised and disturbed.

"Will you give me your word of honour," she said, "that you really have important business here?"

"Yes," he replied, "I give you my word."

"Very well, then I will remain."

"No, you must go."

"I do not understand."

"I will explain later, my love. I believe in you as in God, as you see; have confidence in me. Go."

Thérèse hastily made up a small bundle which she tossed into the carriage; then she took her place beside Laurent, calling back to Palmer:

"I have your word of honour to join me in twenty-four hours."

VIII

Palmer, who was really obliged to remain in Florence and to send Thérèse away, felt a mortal pang as he watched her go. And yet the danger that he dreaded did not exist. The chain could not be rewelded. Laurent did not even think of trying to stir Thérèse's passions; but, feeling sure that he had not lost her heart, he resolved to recover her esteem. He resolved, do we say? No, he made no plan; he simply felt a natural longing to raise himself in the eyes of that woman who had grown so much greater in his mind. If he had appealed to her at that moment, she would have resisted him without difficulty; she would, perhaps, have despised him. He took pains not to do it, or, rather, he did not think of it. His instincts were too true to make such a mistake. In good faith, and with the utmost enthusiasm, he assumed the rôle of the man with the broken heart, of the chastised, humble child, so that, at the end of the journey, Thérèse wondered if *he* were not the victim of their fatal liaison.

During that three days' tête-à-tête, Thérèse was happy with Laurent. She saw a new era of exquisite sentiments opening before her, an unexplored road, for she had hitherto walked alone in it. She enjoyed keenly the pleasurable sensation of loving without remorse, without anxiety, and without a struggle, a pale-faced, feeble creature, who was no longer aught save a soul, so to speak, and whom she fancied she had found again beyond this life, in the paradise of pure spirits, as one dreams of finding one's self after death.

And then she had been deeply wounded and humiliated by him, stirred up and irritated against herself; that love, which she had accepted with so much courage and grandeur of soul, had left a stain, as a purely sensual liaison would have done. Then had come a moment when she had despised herself for allowing herself to be so grossly deceived. So she felt as if she were born again, and she became reconciled with the past when she saw growing upon the grave of that buried passion a flower of enthusiastic friendship lovelier than the passion had been even in its best days.

It was the 10th of May that they arrived at Spezzia, a small picturesque town, half-Genoese and half-Florentine, at the head of a bay as smooth and blue as the loveliest sky. The season for sea-bathing had not arrived. The country round about was an enchanted solitude, the weather cool and exquisite. At sight of that beautiful, calm water, Laurent, whom the carriage journey had fatigued somewhat, decided to go by sea. They inquired about means of transportation; a small steamboat went to Genoa twice a week. Thérèse was glad that it did not start that same evening. Her patient had twenty-four hours for rest. She bade him engage a cabin on the boat for the following day.

Laurent, although he still felt decidedly weak, had never been so well. He slept and ate like a child. The delicious languor of the first days of complete cure caused a blissful sort of confusion in his mind. The memory of his past life vanished like a bad dream. He felt and believed that he was radically changed forever. In this new life, he seemed not to have the faculty of suffering. He left Thérèse with a sort of triumphant joy amid his tears. This submission to the decrees of destiny was in his eyes a voluntary expiation for which she should give

him due credit. He had not sought it, but he had accepted it at the moment when for the first time he realized the value of what he had hitherto failed to appreciate. He carried this craving for self-immolation so far as to tell her that she must love Palmer, that he was the best of friends and the greatest of philosophers. Then he cried abruptly:

"Don't say anything, Thérèse. Don't speak to me of him! I don't feel strong enough yet to hear you say that you love him. No, keep quiet! it would kill me! But be sure that I love him, too! What more can I say?"

Thérèse did not once mention Palmer's name; and when Laurent, less heroic, questioned her indirectly, she replied:

"Hush! I have a secret which I will tell you later, and which is not what you think. You could not guess it, so don't try."

They passed the last day rowing about the harbor of Spezzia. From time to time, they landed to pluck the lovely aromatic plants that grow in the sand even to the verge of the transparent, lazily plashing waves. Trees are rare along those lovely banks, from which mountains covered with flowering shrubs rise perpendicularly. As the heat was somewhat oppressive, they bade the boatman row toward a group of pines as soon as they spied it. They had brought their lunch, which they ate on the grass amid clumps of lavender and rosemary. The day passed like a dream; that is to say, it was brief as a moment, and yet it contained the sweetest emotions of two lives.

At last, the sun declined, and Laurent became melancholy. He saw in the distance the smoke of the *Ferruccio*, the steamer from Spezzia, which was getting up steam in

readiness for sailing, and that black cloud passed over his mind. Thérèse saw that she must distract his thoughts to the very last, and she asked the boatman what more there was to see in the bay.

“There is Isola Palmaria,” he replied, “and the *porior* marble-quarry. If you care to go there, you can take the steamer there. It has to pass the island to go out to sea, for it stops at Porto Venere to take passengers or freight. You will have time enough. I will answer for that.”

The two friends bade him row them to Isola Palmaria.

It is a perpendicular block of marble on the side of the sea, with fertile fields sloping gently down to the shore on the side of the bay. There are a few houses half-way down the slope and two villas on the shore. The island is planted, a sort of natural fortification, at the mouth of the bay, the passage being very narrow between it and the small harbor once consecrated to Venus. Hence the name Porto Venere.

There is nothing about that repulsive village to justify its poetic name; but its situation on the naked rocks, lashed by angry waves,—for they are genuine waves from the sea that rush through the passage,—is as picturesque as possible. One could not imagine a more characteristic stage-setting for a nest of pirates. The houses, black and wretched, corroded by the salt air, stand one above another, immeasurably high, on the uneven rocks. Not a pane unbroken in the little windows, which seem like restless eyes watching for a victim on the horizon. Not a wall that is not stripped of its plaster, which hangs in great layers, like veils torn off by the storm. Not a straight line in all those buildings, which lean against one another and seem on the point of crumbling together. They reach to the very extremity of the

promontory, where they come to an end in an old dilapidated fort and the steeple of a tiny church, standing like sentinels facing the immensity. Behind this picture, which stands in bold outline against the expanse of sea, rise towering cliffs of a livid tint, whose base, irised by reflections from the sea, seems to plunge into something as indefinite and impalpable as the color of the void.

From the marble-quarry on Isola Palmaria, across the narrow passage, Laurent and Thérèse looked upon that picturesque scene. The setting sun cast on the foreground of the picture a reddish light which blended in a single mass, homogeneous in appearance, cliffs, old walls, and ruins, so that everything, even the church, seemed hewn from the same block, while the great rocks in the background swam in a sea-green haze.

Laurent was deeply impressed with the spectacle, and, forgetting all else, contemplated it with the eye of a painter, wherein Thérèse saw, as in a mirror, all the flaming colors of the sky.

"Thank God!" she thought; "the artist is awake at last!"

In truth, since his illness, Laurent had not given a thought to his art.

As there was nothing of interest in the quarry, after they had looked at the great blocks of beautiful black marble, veined with golden yellow, Laurent proposed to ascend the slope and look out to sea from the highest point; and he went on through an almost impassable growth of pines, to a sort of fringe of lichens, where he seemed suddenly to be lost in space. The rock on which he stood overhung the sea, which had eaten into its base, and broke against it with a terrific noise. Laurent, who had no idea that that side of the island was so steep, was seized with such a fit of giddiness that, but for Thérèse,

who had followed him and forced him back upon the ground, he would have fallen into the sea.

At that moment, she saw that he was as terror-stricken and wild-eyed as on that night long before in the forest of —.

“What is the matter?” she asked. “Is this another dream?”

“No! no!” he cried, rising, and clinging to her as if he thought that he had grasped an immovable rock of refuge; “this is no dream, it is reality! It is the sea, the horrible sea, which is to carry me off in a few moments! it is the image of the life to which I am returning! it is the impassable abyss that will soon be between us! it is that monotonous, untiring, hateful noise which I used to go to listen to at night in the roadstead of Genoa, and which roared blasphemies in my ears! it is that brutal ocean swell which I seemed to be trying to overcome in a boat, and which bore me resistlessly toward a deeper and more implacable abyss than that of the waves! Thérèse, Thérèse, do you know what you are doing when you toss me to that monster who is waiting yonder, his hideous jaws already open to devour your poor child?”

“Laurent,” she said, shaking him by the arm, “Laurent, do you hear me?”

He seemed to wake in another world when he recognized Thérèse’s voice; for when he appealed to her he thought that he was alone, and he turned with surprise when he saw that the tree to which he was clinging was nothing else than his friend’s trembling, tired arm.

“Forgive me, forgive me,” he said, “it is a last attack, it is nothing. Let us go!”

And he hurriedly descended the slope which he had ascended with her.

The *Ferruccio* was coming at full speed from Spezzia.

"*Mon Dieu!* there she is!" he said. "How fast she comes! if only she might sink before she gets here!"

"Laurent!" exclaimed Thérèse, sternly.

"Yes, yes, don't be afraid, my dear, I am perfectly calm. Don't you know that all I need now is a glance from you, to obey with joy? Call the boat! Come, it is all over! I am calm, I am content! Give me your hand, Thérèse. Remember, I have not asked you for a single kiss in these three days we have been together! I only ask you for this loyal hand. Do you remember the day you said to me: 'Never forget that before being your mistress, I was your friend!'—Well, it is as you wished: I am no longer anything to you, but I am yours forever!"

He jumped into the boat, thinking that Thérèse would remain on the island, and that the boat would return for her when he had been put aboard the *Ferruccio*; but she jumped in after him. She wanted to make sure, she said, that the servant who was to accompany Laurent, and who should have gone aboard with the luggage at Spezia, had forgotten nothing that his master needed for the voyage.

So she took advantage of the brief stop the little steamer made at Porto Venere to go aboard with Laurent. Vicentino, the servant in question, awaited them. He was a trustworthy man, selected by Monsieur Palmer, it will be remembered. Thérèse took him aside.

"You have your master's purse, have you not?" she said. "I know that he told you to look after all the expenses of the trip. How much money did he give you?"

"Two hundred Florentine *lire*, signora; but I think that he has his wallet with him."

Thérèse had examined Laurent's pockets while he slept. She had found the wallet, and knew that it was almost empty. Laurent had spent a large amount in Florence;

the expenses of his illness had been very considerable. He had placed the remainder of his little fortune in Palmer's hands, bidding him make up the accounts, and he had not glanced at them. In money matters, Laurent was a genuine child, who knew the value of nothing at all outside of France, not even the comparative value of the coins of the different Italian provinces. The amount he had handed to Vicentino seemed to him enough to last a long while, but it was not enough to reach the frontier for a man who had not the slightest idea of prudence.

Thérèse gave Vicentino all the money that she had in Italy, not even retaining what she herself would require for a few days; for, seeing that Laurent was coming toward her, she had no time to take one or two gold pieces from the roll which she slipped hurriedly into the servant's hand, saying:

"This is what he had in his pockets; he is very absent-minded, and prefers that you should take charge of it."

And she turned to the artist to exchange a last grasp of the hand. She deceived him this time without remorse. He had been distressed and irritated once before when she wished to pay his debts; now, she was no more than a mother to him, and she had the right to do as she was doing.

Laurent had seen nothing.

"One moment more, Thérèse!" he said in a voice choked by tears. "They will ring a bell to warn those who are not passengers to go ashore."

She put her arm through his, and went to inspect his cabin, which was comfortable enough for sleeping-quarters, but smelt disgustingly of fish. Thérèse felt for her smelling-bottle to leave with him; but she had lost it on the island.

"Why are you so anxious?" he said, touched by these attentions. "Give me a piece of the wild lavender we plucked together in the sand yonder."

Thérèse had placed the flowers in her corsage; to leave them with him was like leaving a pledge of love. There seemed to her something indelicate, or equivocal at least, in that idea, and her womanly instinct rebelled; but, as she leaned over the rail, she saw in one of the skiffs made fast to the gangway a child offering great bunches of violets for sale. She felt in her pockets, and was delighted to find there one last remaining coin, which she tossed to the little fellow, who in return tossed his finest bunch over the rail; she caught it handily, and spread the flowers about Laurent's cabin. He appreciated his friend's modesty, but he never knew that those violets were paid for with Thérèse's last and only sou.

A young man, whose travelling costume and aristocratic air were in striking contrast to those of the other passengers, who were mostly dealers in olive-oil, or small traders along the coast, passed Laurent, and, after glancing at him, said:

"Hollo! is it you?"

They shook hands with the absolute coldness of gesture and feature which is the stamp of young men of fashion. And yet he was one of those former companions in debauchery whom Laurent, speaking of them to Thérèse in his days of ennui, had called his best, his only friends. "People of my rank!" he would add; for he never lost his temper with Thérèse without reminding her that he was a gentleman.

But Laurent had mended his ways, and, instead of rejoicing at this meeting, he inwardly consigned to the devil this unwelcome witness of his last farewell to Thérèse. Monsieur de Vérac—such was his former friend's name—

knew Thérèse, having been presented to her by Laurent at Paris; and, having respectfully saluted her, he observed that he was very fortunate to meet two travelling companions like Laurent and herself on the wretched little *Ferruccio*.

"But I am not one of you," she replied; "I remain here."

"Here? Where? At Porto Venere?"

"In Italy."

"Oho! then Fauvel is going to do some errands for you at Genoa, I suppose, and return to-morrow?"

"No!" said Laurent, vexed by this curiosity, which seemed to him ungentlemanly; "I am going to Switzerland, and Mademoiselle Jacques is not. Does that surprise you? Very good; then let me tell you that Mademoiselle Jacques is about to leave me, and that I am very much distressed. Do you understand?"

"No!" said Vêrac, smiling; "but I am not obliged——"

"Yes, you are; you must understand what is a fact," retorted Laurent, with a vehemence that was slightly overbearing; "I have deserved what has happened to me, and I submit to it because Mademoiselle Jacques, regardless of the wrong I have done her, deigned to be a sister and a mother to me in a mortal illness which I have just gone through; so that I owe her as much gratitude as respect and affection."

Vêrac was greatly surprised by what he heard. It was a story which resembled nothing in his experience. He walked discreetly away, after remarking to Thérèse that no noble action on her part would surprise him; but he watched the parting of the friends out of the corner of his eye. Thérèse, standing at the top of the gangway, crowded and jostled by the natives who embraced one another tumultuously and noisily at the clang of the

warning-bell, bestowed a maternal kiss on Laurent's forehead. They both shed tears; then she went down into the skiff, and was rowed ashore to the shapeless, dirty staircase of flat stones which led to the hamlet of Porto Venere.

Laurent was amazed to see her go in that direction, instead of toward Spezzia.

"Ah!" he thought, weeping afresh, "of course, Palmer is waiting for her there!"

But, ten minutes later, as the *Ferruccio*, after steaming out to sea with some effort, turned to round the promontory, Laurent, as he cast his eyes for the last time upon that dismal cliff, saw, on the platform of the old ruined fort, a figure whose head and waving hair were still tinged with gold by the sun's declining rays; it was Thérèse's fair hair and her adored form. She was alone. Laurent held out his arms with intense emotion; then he clasped his hands in token of repentance, and his lips murmured two words which the breeze bore away:

"Forgive! forgive!"

Monsieur de Vêrac gazed at him in speechless amazement; and Laurent, the most sensitive man on earth in the matter of ridicule, did not heed the glance of his former companion in debauchery. Indeed, he took a sort of pride in braving it at that moment.

When the shore had disappeared in the evening haze, Laurent found himself seated on a bench by Vêrac's side.

"Come," said the latter, "tell me about this extraordinary experience! You have said too much to leave me in ignorance of the rest; all your friends in Paris—I might say all Paris, since you are a famous man—will ask me concerning the progress of your liaison with Mademoiselle Jacques, who is also too much in the public eye not to arouse curiosity. What shall I reply?"

"That you found me very downcast and shamefaced. That what I told you can be summed up in three words. Must I say them again?"

"Then you really abandoned her first? I like that better for your sake!"

"Yes, I understand; it is ridiculous to be betrayed, it is glorious to have taken the first step. That is the way I used to reason with you, that was our code; but I have changed my ideas altogether concerning all such matters since I have been in love. I betrayed her, I have been deserted, I am in despair: therefore our former theories had no common-sense. Find in the theory of life which we used to put in practice together an argument which will relieve me of my regret and my suffering, and I will say that you are right."

"I shall seek no arguments, my dear fellow; suffering is not to be argued with. I pity you because you are unhappy; but I am wondering if there is a woman in existence who deserves to be mourned so deeply, and if Mademoiselle Jacques would not have done better to forgive an act of infidelity, than to dismiss you in your present desperate state. For a mother, she seems to me a trifle stern and vindictive!"

"That is because you don't know how guilty and absurd I have been. An act of infidelity! she would have forgiven that, I am sure; but insults, reproaches!—and worse than that, Vérac! I said something to her that no self-respecting woman can ever forget: '*You bore me!*'"

"Yes, that is a rough thing to say, especially when it is true. But suppose it was not true? suppose you simply said it in a moment of anger?"

"No! it was mental weariness. I had ceased to love her. Stay, it was worse than that: I was never able to love her when she was mine. Just remember that,

Vérac; laugh if you please, but remember that for your own guidance. It is very possible that you will wake up some fine morning, sated with sham pleasures and violently in love with a virtuous woman. That may happen to you as it has happened to me, for I do not think that you are any more dissipated than I used to be. Well, when you have overcome that woman's resistance, probably the same thing will happen to you as to me: having acquired the deplorable habit of making love to women you despise, you will be doomed to fall back into those cravings for a barbarous sort of liberty of which dignified love has a horror. Thereupon, you will feel like a wild animal tamed by a child, and always ready to devour him in order to break its chain. And some day, when you have killed the helpless little keeper, you will fly all alone, roaring with joy and shaking your mane; but then—then the wild beasts of the desert will frighten you, and, because you have once learned to know the cage, you will care no more for liberty. However slight the bond, and however unwillingly your heart may have accepted it, it will regret it as soon as it is broken, and it will have a horror of solitude, yet be powerless to choose between love and libertinism. That is a form of suffering which you do not yet know. God grant that you may never know it! And meanwhile laugh and jeer as I used to do! That will not prevent your day from coming if debauchery has not already made a corpse of you!"

Monsieur de Vérac, smiling, allowed this torrent of words to flow, listening to it as to a well-executed cava-tina at the Théâtre-Italien. Laurent was unquestionably sincere; but perhaps his auditor was justified in not attaching too great weight to his despair.

IX

When Thérèse finally lost sight of the *Ferruccio*, it was quite dark. She had dismissed the boat which she had hired in the morning at Spezzia, and paid for in advance. When the boatman rowed her ashore from the steamer, she had noticed that he was drunk; she was afraid to return to Spezzia alone with him, and, expecting to find some other boat on the shore, she had dismissed him.

But when she thought seriously about returning, she remembered that she was absolutely destitute. Nothing could be simpler, of course, than to go back to the *Maltese Cross* at Spezzia, where she and Laurent had passed the preceding night, to have the boatman paid at the office, and to await Palmer's arrival there; but the idea of being entirely destitute, and of being obliged to owe her breakfast the next day to Palmer, caused a feeling of repugnance, puerile, perhaps, but insurmountable, considering the existing relations between them. Furthermore, she was more than a little disturbed as to the real explanation of his conduct toward her. She had noticed the heart-rending sadness of his glance when she left Florence. She could not refrain from thinking that an obstacle to their marriage had suddenly arisen, and she saw in the projected union so many real drawbacks for Palmer, that she considered it her duty not to contend against the obstacle in whatever quarter it might arise. Thérèse adopted an altogether instinctive solution of the problem, which was to remain for the present at Porto Venere. In the small bundle which she had brought with her to

guard against emergencies, she had enough clothes to pass four or five days anywhere. In the way of jewels, she had a gold watch and chain; these she could leave in pawn until she had received the pay for her work, which should have reached Genoa in the form of a banker's draft. She had directed Vicentino to call for her letters at Genoa and forward them to Spezzia.

She must pass the night somewhere, and the appearance of Porto Venere was not inviting. The tall houses along the narrow passage out to sea, which reach to the water's edge, are so nearly on a level with the top of the cliff in the rear, that in many places one must stoop in order to pass under the overhanging roofs which reach nearly to the middle of the street. That steep, narrow street, paved with rough cobble-stones, was crowded with children, hens, and large copper vessels placed at the angles formed by the roofs to catch the rain-water during the night. These vessels are the barometer of the locality: fresh water is so scarce there, that as soon as a cloud appears in the direction from which the wind is blowing, the housewives hasten to place all practicable receptacles in front of their doors, in order not to lose a drop of the blessing sent by Heaven.

As she passed before those yawning doorways, Thérèse caught a glimpse of one interior which seemed cleaner than the others and which exhaled a somewhat less acrid odor of oil. In the doorway was a poor woman whose pleasant and honest face inspired confidence; and the woman anticipated her by speaking to her in Italian or something approaching it. Thus she and Thérèse were able to understand each other. The goodwoman asked her pleasantly if she were looking for any one. She went in, looked about, and asked if she could hire a room for the night.

"Yes, to be sure, a better room than this, and you will be much quieter than at the inn, where you would hear the sailors singing all night long! But I am not an inn-keeper, and if you don't want me to have quarrels on my hands, you will say publicly in the street to-morrow that you knew me before you came here."

"Very well," said Thérèse, "show me the room."

She was led up several steps and found herself in an enormous, miserable room, which commanded a panorama of vast extent on the bay and on the open sea; she took a liking to the room at first sight, for no special reason, unless it was that it seemed to her a sort of refuge against new bonds which she did not wish to be forced to accept. In that room she wrote on the following day to her mother:

"MY DEAREST LOVE:

"For twelve hours I have been at peace and in full possession of my free will for—I know not how many days or years. Everything is unsettled again in my mind, and you shall form your own opinion of the situation of affairs.

"That fatal love which alarmed you so is not renewed and never will be. You may set your mind at rest on that point. I came here with my patient, and put him aboard ship last night. If I have not saved his poor heart, and I hardly dare flatter myself that I have, I have made it better at all events, and through me it has enjoyed the sweet pleasure of friendship for a few moments. If I could have believed him, he was cured forever of his tempestuous outbreaks; but I could see plainly enough, from his contradictions and his relapses with respect to me, that the foundation of his nature is still unchanged, and the something still exists that I cannot define otherwise than as the love of that which is not.

"Alas! yes, that child would like to have for his mistress some one like the Venus de Milo, enlivened with the breath of my patron Sainte Thérèse, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the same woman should be Sappho to-day and Jeanne d'Arc to-morrow. It is most unfortunate for me that I ever believed that, after adorning me in his imagination with all the attributes of the Divinity, he would not open his eyes the next day! It must be that, without suspecting it, I am very vain, to have accepted the task of inspiring a cult! But, no, I was not, I give you my word! I did not think of myself; on the day when I allowed myself to be placed on that altar, I said to him: 'Since you absolutely insist upon adoring me instead of loving me, which I should much prefer, why, adore me, reserving the right to crush me to-morrow!'

"And he has crushed me! But of what can I complain? I anticipated it, and resigned myself to it beforehand.

"But I was weak, undignified, and wretched when that horrible moment came. My courage returned, however, and God permitted me to recover more quickly than I hoped.

"Now, I must speak to you of Palmer. You wish me to marry him, he wishes it, and I, too, did wish it! Do I wish it still? What shall I say, my beloved? I still am tortured by scruples and fears. Perhaps it is his fault. He could not or would not pass with me the last moments that I passed with Laurent; he left me alone with him three days, three days which I knew would be, and which actually were, without danger for me; but did he, Palmer, know it, and could he be sure of it? or—which would be much worse—did he say to himself that he must find out how far he could depend on me? There was on his part

either a display of romantic unselfishness or an exaggerated discretion, which, in such a man, can come only from some worthy sentiment, but which has given me food for reflection none the less.

"I have written you what took place between us; it seemed to me that he had taken it upon himself as a sacred duty to rehabilitate me by marriage, after the affronts to which I had been subjected. I felt the enthusiasm of gratitude and the emotion that follows profound admiration. I said yes, I promised to be his wife, and to-day I feel that I love him as much as it is in my power to love.

"And yet to-day I hesitate, because it seems to me that he repents. Am I dreaming? I have no idea; but why could he not come here with me? When I learned of my poor Laurent's terrible illness, he did not wait for me to say: 'I am going to Florence;' but he said to me: 'Let us go!'—The twenty nights that I passed at Laurent's bedside, he passed in the next room, and he never said to me: 'You are killing yourself!' but simply: 'Take a little rest, so that you can go on with it.'—I have never detected the shadow of jealousy in him. It seemed that in his eyes I could never do too much to save the ungrateful boy whom we had both of us adopted, as it were. He knew, noble heart, that his confidence and generosity increased my love for him, and I was infinitely grateful to him for understanding it. In that way he raised me in my own eyes, and made me proud to belong to him.

"Very well; then why this whim or this obstacle at the last moment? An unforeseen obstacle? With the strong will that I know him to possess, I hardly believe in obstacles; it seems more probable that he wished to test me. That humiliates me, I confess. Alas! I have become horribly sensitive since I fell! Is it not natural?

why did not he, who understands everything, understand that?

“Or, perhaps he has thought better of it, and has said to himself all that I said to him, from principle, in order to prevent his thinking of me; what would there be surprising in that? I had always known Palmer as a prudent and sensible man. When I discovered in him stores of enthusiasm and trust, I was greatly surprised. Might he not be one of those who take fire when they see others suffer, and who fall to loving the victims passionately? That is a natural instinct in those who are strong, it is the sublime pity of pure and happy hearts! There were moments when I said that to myself, in order to reconcile me with myself,—when I loved Laurent, for it was his suffering, before and above all else, that attached me to him!

“All this that I am saying to you, my dearest love, I should not dare to say to Richard Palmer if he were here. I should be afraid that my doubts would cause him horrible pain, and I am sorely embarrassed, for I have these doubts in spite of myself, and I am afraid, for to-morrow at all events, if not for to-day. Will he not cover himself with ridicule by marrying a woman whom he has loved, he says, for ten years, to whom he has never lisped a word of anything of the sort, and whom he decides to attack on the day that he finds her crushed and bleeding under the feet of another man?

“I am sojourning in a horrible yet magnificent little seaport, where I passively await the command of my destiny. Perhaps Palmer is at Spezzia, three leagues away. That was where we had arranged to meet. And I, like a sulking, or rather like a timid, child, cannot make up my mind to go to him and say: ‘Here I am!’—No, no! if he suspects me, no further relations between us are

possible! I forgave the other five or six insults a day. With this one I could not overlook the shadow of a suspicion. Is this unjust? No! henceforth I must have a sublime love or nothing! Did I seek his love? He forced it upon me, saying: 'It will be heaven!'—The other had told me that perhaps what he brought me would be hell. He did not deceive me. Nor must Palmer deceive me, while deceiving himself; for, after this new error, nothing would be left for me but to deny everything, to say to myself that, like Laurent, I have forfeited forever, by my own fault, the right to believe; and I do not know whether, with that certainty, I could endure life!

"Forgive me, my beloved; my perplexities distress you, I am sure, although you would say that I must spare you none of them! At all events, have no anxiety concerning my health; I am exceedingly well, I have the loveliest bit of ocean before my eyes, and over my head the loveliest sky that can be imagined. I lack nothing, I am boarding with excellent people, and it is likely that I shall write you to-morrow that my uncertainties have disappeared. Do not forget to love your Thérèse, who adores you."

Palmer had actually been at Spezzia since the preceding night. He had purposely arrived just an hour after the sailing of the *Ferruccio*. Not finding Thérèse at the *Maltese Cross*, and learning that she had planned to put Laurent on board at the mouth of the bay, he awaited her return. At nine o'clock, the boatman she had hired in the morning, who belonged to the hotel, returned alone. The worthy man was not accustomed to drink too much. He had been *surprised* by a bottle of Cyprus, which Laurent gave him after his lunch on the grass with Thérèse, and which he drank during their stay on the Isola Palmaria; so

that he remembered well enough that he had put the signor and signora aboard the *Ferruccio*, but had no remembrance of having afterward taken the signora to Porto Venere.

If Palmer had questioned him calmly, he would soon have discovered that the man's ideas were not very clear on the latter point; but the American, notwithstanding his serious and impassive manner, was very irritable and very passionate. He believed that Thérèse had gone with Laurent, gone shamefacedly, afraid or unwilling to confess the truth to him. He was thoroughly convinced, and returned to the hotel, where he passed a terrible night.

We have not undertaken to tell the story of Richard Palmer. We have entitled our tale *She and He*, that is to say, Thérèse and Laurent. Of Palmer, therefore, we shall say no more than it is necessary to say to make it possible to understand the events in which he was involved, and we think that his character will be sufficiently explained by his conduct. Let us hasten to say simply this, that Richard was as ardent as he was romantic, that he had an abundance of pride, pride in the good and the beautiful, but that the strength of his character did not always come up to the idea he had formed of it, and that, while striving constantly to rise above human nature, he cherished a noble dream, but one probably impossible of realization in love.

He rose early, and walked by the shore of the bay, thinking seriously of suicide, from which he was turned aside, however, by a feeling of something like contempt for Thérèse; then the fatigue of a night of intense agitation asserted itself and gave him sensible advice. Thérèse was a woman, and he should not have subjected her to a hazardous trial. But since he had done so, since Thérèse,

whom he had placed so high in his esteem, had been vanquished by a deplorable passion after her sacred promises, why, he must never believe in any woman, and no woman deserved the sacrifice of a good man's life. Palmer had progressed thus far when he saw a graceful black cutter drawing near the place where he stood, with a naval officer at the stern. The eight oarsmen who pulled the long and narrow craft swiftly through the smooth water tossed their white oars by way of salute, with military precision; the officer stepped ashore and walked toward Richard, whom he had recognized in the distance.

It was Captain Lawson, in command of the American frigate *Union*, which had been stationed in the bay for a year. It is common knowledge that the different maritime powers are accustomed to station war vessels, for months or even for years, all over the globe to safeguard their commercial interests.

Lawson had been a friend of Palmer's from boyhood, and Thérèse was provided with a letter of introduction to him, in case she should care to visit the ship while rowing about the harbor.

Palmer thought that Lawson would mention her, but he did not. He had received no letter, had had no visit from any friend of Palmer's. He invited him to breakfast on board, and Richard made no objection. The *Union* was to leave the station at the end of the spring. He conceived the idea of seizing the opportunity to return to America in her. Everything seemed to be at an end between Thérèse and him; however, he determined to remain at Spezzia, the sight of the sea having always had a strengthening influence upon him in the critical moments of his life.

He had been there three days, living on board the American vessel much more than at the *Maltese Cross*,

making an effort to revive his interest in the study of navigation, which had occupied the greater part of his life, when a young ensign, at breakfast one morning, declared, half-laughing and half-sighing, that he had fallen in love the day before, and that the object of his passion was a problem concerning which he should be glad to have the opinion of a man of the world like Palmer.

She was a woman apparently twenty-five to thirty years old. He had simply seen her at a window at which she was seated making lace. Coarse cotton lace is made by women all along the Genoese coast. It was formerly a flourishing branch of commerce, which the looms have ruined, but which still affords occupation and a trifling profit to the women and girls of the coast. Therefore the young woman of whom the ensign was enamored belonged to the artisan class, not only because of the work she was doing, but because of the poverty of the house in which he had seen her. And yet the cut of her black dress and the distinction of her features caused some doubt in his mind. She had wavy hair, which was neither dark nor light; dreamy eyes, a pale complexion. She had seen that the young officer was gazing curiously at her from the inn, where he had sought refuge from the rain. She had not condescended to encourage him or to avoid his glances. She had presented a distressing image of indifference personified.

The young seaman also stated that he questioned the innkeeper's wife at Porto Venere. She had told him that the stranger had been there three days, living with an old woman who said that she was her niece and who probably lied, for she was an old schemer who let a miserable bedroom to the detriment of the genuine, licensed public-house, and who apparently presumed to invite and entertain guests, but who must feed them very badly,

for she had nothing, and for that reason deserved the contempt of all well-to-do people and self-respecting travellers.

As a result of this harangue, the young ensign lost no time in going to the old woman and asking her for lodgings for a friend of his whom he was expecting, hoping, by means of this fable, to induce her to talk, and to learn something about the stranger; but the old woman was impenetrable, yes, and incorruptible.

The portrait that the officer drew of this young unknown aroused Palmer's attention. It might be Thérèse; but what was she doing at Porto Venere? why was she hiding there? Of course, she was not alone; Laurent must be hidden in some other corner. Palmer deliberated whether or not he should go to China in order not to witness his misfortune. However, he adopted the more sensible course, which was to find out the truth of the matter.

He crossed at once to Porto Venere, and had no difficulty in discovering Thérèse, lodged and occupied as he had been told. They had an earnest and frank explanation. They were both too sincere to sulk; so they both confessed that they had been angry, Palmer because Thérèse had not let him know where she had concealed herself, Thérèse because Palmer had not sooner sought and found her.

"My dear," said he, "you seem to reproach me most of all for having, as it were, exposed you to some danger. I did not believe that that danger existed!"

"You were right, and I thank you. But in that case, why were you so depressed and despairing when I left you? and how does it happen that you did not discover where I was the very first day after you arrived here? Did you suppose that I had left, and that it was useless to search for me?"

"Listen to me," said Palmer, evading the question, "and you will see that I have had, during the last few days, much rough experience that may well have made me lose my head. You will also understand why, having first known you when you were very young and when it was possible for me to think of marrying you, I let slip a happiness which I have never ceased to dream of and to regret. I was at that time the lover of a woman who has deceived me in a thousand ways. For ten years I considered myself in duty bound to keep her on her feet and shelter her. At last, she put the finishing-touch to her ingratitude and treachery, and I was able to leave her, to forget her, and to dispose of myself as I chose. But I fell in with that woman, whom I supposed to be in England, in Florence, just as Laurent was about to leave. Abandoned by a new lover who had taken my place, she desired and expected to recapture me: so many times before had she found me generous or weak! She wrote me a threatening letter, and, feigning an utterly absurd jealousy, she declared that she would come to insult you in my presence. I knew that she was a woman who would recoil from no scandal, and I would not for anything in the world have had you see her in one of her fits of frenzy. I could not persuade her not to appear on the scene, except by promising to have an explanation with her the same day. She was living in the same hotel where we were living with our sick man, and when Laurent's carriage was at the door, she was on hand, determined to make a scene. Her detestable and ridiculous plan was to exclaim before all the hotel people and the whole street that I shared my new mistress with Laurent de Fauvel. That is why I sent you away with him, and why I remained behind, in order to have done with that mad woman without compromising you, and without

exposing you to the necessity of seeing her or listening to her. Now, do not say again that my purpose was to subject you to a test by leaving you alone with Laurent. I suffered enough on that account, God knows! don't reproach me! And when I thought of your having gone with him, all the demons of hell attacked me."

"And that is what I reproach you for," said Thérèse.

"Ah! what can you expect!" cried Palmer; "I have been so miserably deceived in my life! That wretched woman stirred up a whole world of bitterness and contempt in me."

"And that contempt overflowed on me!"

"Oh! don't say so, Thérèse!"

"But I, too, have been deceived," she rejoined, "and I believe in you none the less."

"Let us say no more about it, my love; I regret that I have been driven to tell you the story of my past. You will believe that it may react on my future, and that, like Laurent, I shall make you pay for the treachery with which I have been sated. Come, come, my dear Thérèse, let us have done with these depressing thoughts. This place you are in is enough to give one the blues. The boat is waiting; come and take up your quarters at Spezzia."

"No," said Thérèse, "I shall stay here."

"What? what does this mean? hard feeling between us?"

"No, no, my dear Dick," she replied, offering him her hand; "I can never be angry with you. Oh! I implore you, let our affection be ideally sincere; for my part, I will do all that it is possible for a trustful heart to do to that end; but I did not know that you were jealous, whereas you were and you admit it. Be sure that it is not in my power to avoid suffering keenly from your jealousy."

It is so entirely opposed to what you promised me, that I cannot help asking myself whither we are going now, and why it was necessary that, on making my escape from a hell, I should enter a purgatory, when I aspired to naught save repose and solitude.—Not for myself alone do I dread these new tortures which seem to be brewing for me; if it were possible that in love one of the two should be happy while the other suffers, the path of self-sacrifice would be all marked out and easy to follow; but, as you see, that is not the case: I cannot have a moment's pain that you do not feel. So here am I, who sought to render my life inoffensive, in a fair way to ruin your life, and I am beginning to make a man unhappy! No, Palmer, believe me, we thought that we knew each other, but we did not. What attracted me in you was a trait which you have already lost—confidence. Don't you understand that, debased as I was, I needed that, and nothing else, in order to love you? If I should now accept your affection with its blemishes and weaknesses, with its doubts and tempests, would you not be justified in saying to yourself that I was influenced by selfish motives in marrying you? Oh! do not say that that idea will never occur to you; it will occur to you in spite of yourself. I know too well how a person goes from one suspicion to another, and what a steep incline hurries us from a first disenchantment to humiliating repulsion! Now I, for my part, have drunk enough of that gall! I want no more of it, and I do not assume too much in saying I am no longer capable of undergoing what I have undergone; I told you so the very first day, and, although you may have forgotten it, I remember it. Let us put aside this idea of marriage," she added, "and remain friends. I retract my promise provisionally, until I can rely upon your esteem, such esteem as I supposed that I possessed. If you are not

willing to submit to a trial, let us part at once. As for myself, I swear that I do not propose to owe anything to you, not even the most trivial service, while I am in my present position. I must tell you what that position is, for you must fully understand my purpose. I have board and lodging here on the strength of my word, for I am absolutely penniless, I gave all I had to Vicentino to pay the expenses of Laurent's journey; but it happens that I can make lace quicker and better than the women here-about, and, pending the arrival of my money from Genoa, I can earn enough from day to day to pay my excellent landlady for the very frugal board with which she supplies me, if not to reward her. I am neither distressed nor humiliated by this state of things, and it must continue until my money arrives. Then I will see what it is best to do. Until then, return to Spezzia, and come to see me when you choose; I will make lace as we chat."

Palmer had to submit, and he submitted with a good grace. He hoped to regain Thérèse's confidence, which he felt that he had shaken by his own fault.

X

A few days later, Thérèse received a letter from Geneva. Laurent accused himself, in writing, of all that he had previously accused himself of in speech, as if he had determined to perpetuate thus the testimony of his repentance.

"No," he wrote, "I was not capable of deserving you. I was unworthy of such a generous, pure, and unselfish affection. I tired out your patience, O my sister, my

mother! Even the angels would have been tired of me! Ah! Thérèse, as I return to health and life, my memory becomes clearer, and I look into my past as into a mirror, which shows me the spectre of a man whom I once knew, but whom I no longer understand. Surely, that poor devil was mad; don't you think, Thérèse, that, as I drew nearer to that ghastly physical illness from which you saved me, I may have been, even three or four months beforehand, in the grasp of a moral illness which took from me all consciousness of my words and my acts? Ah! if that were so, should you not have forgiven me? But what I am saying lacks common-sense, alas! What is wrong-doing, if not a moral malady? Could not the man who kills his father allege the same excuse that I do? Good, evil—this is the first time that that idea has ever bothered me. Before I knew you and made you suffer, my poor love, I had never thought of it. Evil was to my mind a monster of low estate, the apocalyptic beast that soils with his hideous caresses the offscourings of mankind in the unhealthy bogs of society; could evil come near me, the man of fashion, the Parisian *beau*, the son of the Muses? Ah! fool that I was, I imagined, because my beard was perfumed and my hands neatly gloved, that my caresses would purify the great harlot of the nations, debauchery, my fiancée, who had bound me to her with chains as noble as those with which convicts are bound in the galleys! And I sacrificed you, my poor, sweet mistress, in my brutal egotism, and after that I held my head erect, saying: 'It was my right, she belonged to me; nothing that I have the right to do can be evil!'—Ah! miserable, miserable creature that I am! my behavior was criminal; and I never suspected it! Nothing would make me understand it but to lose you, you, my only treasure, the only mortal who had ever

loved me and who was capable of loving the insane and ungrateful child that I was! Not until I saw my guardian angel veil her face and resume her flight heavenward did I realize that I was forever alone and abandoned on earth!"

A large part of this first letter was written in a lofty tone, the sincerity of which was confirmed by realistic touches and abrupt changes of manner, characteristic of Laurent.

"Would you believe that, on my arrival at Geneva, the first thing that I did, even before I thought of writing to you, was to go out and buy a waistcoat? Yes, a summer waistcoat, a very pretty one, on my word, and very well made, which I found at a French tailor's,—a most agreeable find for a traveller in great haste to leave this city of watchmakers and naturalists! Behold me, therefore, parading the streets of Geneva, delighted with my new waistcoat, and halting in front of a book-shop where an edition of Byron, bound in exquisite taste, offered an irresistible temptation to me. What am I to read while travelling? I cannot endure books of travel, unless they treat of countries which I shall never be able to visit. I prefer the poets, who take you into the world of their dreams, and I purchased this edition. And then I followed aimlessly a very pretty girl in a short dress who passed me, and whose ankle seemed to me a masterpiece of jointing. I followed her, thinking much more of my waistcoat than of her. Suddenly she turned to the right and I to the left without noticing it, and I found myself back at my hotel, where, as I went to put my new books in my trunk, I discovered the double violets that you strewed in my cabin on the *Ferruccio* when we parted.

I picked them up, one by one, with great care, and kept them as a relic; but they made me weep like a water-spout, and, glancing at my new waistcoat, which had been the principal event of my morning, I said to myself:

“‘And yet this is the child that that poor woman loved!’”

Elsewhere he said:

“You made me promise to take care of my health. ‘As it was I who gave it back to you,’ you said, ‘it belongs to me in a measure, and I have the right to forbid you to throw it away.’—Alas! my Thérèse, what do you expect me to do with this infernal health, which begins to intoxicate me like new wine? The spring is at hand, it is the season for loving, I know; but is it in my power to love? *You* were unable to inspire true love in my heart, and do you suppose that I shall meet a woman capable of performing the miracle that you could not perform? Where am I to find this magician? In society? No, surely not: there are no women there but those who do not choose to risk or sacrifice anything. They are quite right, no doubt, and you could tell them, my poor dear, that those for whom a woman sacrifices herself seldom deserve it; but it is not my fault if I can no more readily make up my mind to share with a husband than with a lover. But should I love a maiden? and marry her? Oh! surely, Thérèse, you cannot think of that without laughing—or without trembling. Think of me, chained by the law, when even my own desires are powerless to chain me!

“I once had a friend who loved a grisette and who believed that she was true to him. I paid court to that faithful light-o’-love, and she was mine for a green parrot which her lover would not give her. She said, artlessly:

'*Dame!* 'tis his own fault; why didn't he give me that parrot!' And from that day I have sworn never to love a kept woman, that is to say, a woman who longs for everything her lover does not give her.

"Thus, in the way of mistresses, there seems to be nothing left but an adventuress, such as we meet on the high-roads, who are all born princesses but have had *misfortunes*. Too many misfortunes, thank you! I am not rich enough to fill the gulf of those past lives.—A famous actress? That idea has often tempted me; but my mistress must renounce the public, and the public is a lover that I do not feel the strength to replace. No, no, Thérèse, I cannot love! I ask too much, and I ask what I cannot give back; so I shall have to return to my former life. I prefer that, because your image in my heart will never be contaminated by possible comparisons. Why should my life not be arranged thus: women for the passions, and a mistress for my heart? It is not in your power nor in mine, Thérèse, to effect that you should be that mistress, that ideal which I have dreamed of, lost, and wept for, and of which I dream now more longingly than ever. I will never suggest such a thing to you, for you may take offence. I will love you in my secret thoughts so that no one will know it and no other woman can ever say: 'I have replaced that Thérèse!'

"My dear, you must grant me a favor which you denied me during those last dear, sweet days that we passed together; you must tell me something of Palmer. You have thought that that would increase my pain. But you are mistaken. It would have killed me the first time that I questioned you about him angrily; I was still sick and a little mad; but, when my reason returned, when you let me guess the *secret* that you were not obliged to confide to me, I felt, in the midst of my grief, that by

being reconciled to your happiness I should atone for all my wrong-doing. I watched closely your manner when you were together; I saw that he loved you passionately, and that he seemed, nevertheless, to have a fatherly affection for me. That was too much for me, Thérèse. I had no conception of such generosity, such grandeur in love. Lucky Palmer! how sure he is of you, how fully he understands you, and consequently deserves you! It reminded me of the time when I said to you: 'Love Palmer, you will do me a great favor!'—Ah! what a hateful sentiment I had in my heart at that time! I longed to be delivered from your love, which overwhelmed me with remorse, and yet, if you had answered me then: 'I do love him,' I would have killed you!

"And he, that great, warm heart, already loved you, and was not afraid to devote his life to you, when perhaps you still loved me! Under such circumstances, I would never have dared to take the risk. I had too large a dose of that pride which we parade so haughtily, we men of the world, and which was invented by fools to prevent us from striving to win happiness at any risk to ourselves, or from even knowing enough to grasp it when it is slipping from us.

"Yes, I propose to confess to the end, my poor dear. When I said to you: 'Love Palmer,' I believed, at times, that you already loved him, and that is what finally drew me apart from you. In the last days, there were many hours when I was on the point of throwing myself at your feet; I was kept from it by this thought: 'It is too late, she loves another. It was my wish, but she should not have consented. Therefore she is unworthy of me!'

"That is how I reasoned in my madness, and yet I am sure now that if I had come back to you in all sincerity, even though you had begun to love Dick, you would

have sacrificed him to me. You would have entered anew upon that martyrdom which I forced on you. Tell me, did I not do well to run away? I felt that I did, when I left you. Yes, Thérèse, that was what gave me strength to run away to Florence without a word to you. I felt that I was killing you day by day, and that there was no other way to undo the wrong I had done you than to leave you with a man who really loved you.

"That was what sustained my courage at Spezzia, too, during that day when I might have made another attempt to obtain my pardon; but that detestable thought did not once occur to me, I give you my word, my friend. I don't know whether you had told that boatman not to lose sight of us; but it was quite unnecessary. I would have thrown myself into the sea rather than try to betray the confidence in me which Palmer displayed in leaving us together.

"Say to him, then, that I love him dearly, as much as I can love. Tell him that it is to him as much as to you that I am indebted for having condemned and executed myself as I have done. I suffered terribly, God knows, in committing that suicide of the old man! But I am proud of myself now. All my former friends would consider that I had been a fool or a coward not to try to kill my rival in a duel, and then to abandon the woman who had betrayed me, spitting in her face. Yes, Thérèse, that is the judgment which I myself should probably have pronounced upon another man for conducting himself as I have conducted myself toward you and Palmer with so much resolution and delight. I am not a brute, thank God! I am not good for much, but I understand how little I am good for, and I do myself justice.

"So write me about Palmer, and do not be afraid that it will hurt me; far from it; it will be my consolation in

my hours of spleen. It will be my strength, too; for your poor child is still sadly weak, and, when he begins to think of what he might have been and what he actually is to you, his head becomes still more confused. But tell me that you are happy, and I will say, proudly: 'I might have disturbed, combated, and perhaps destroyed her happiness; I did not do it. So it is my work to some extent, and I am entitled now to Thérèse's friendship.'

Thérèse replied affectionately to her poor child. That was the title under which he was thenceforth buried and, as it were, embalmed in the sanctuary of the past. Thérèse loved Palmer; at least, she wished to love him, and believed that she did. It did not seem to her that she could ever regret the time when, as she afterward said, she looked up every morning when she woke to see if the house were not falling about her ears.

And yet something was lacking, and an indefinable depression of spirits had taken possession of her since she had dwelt upon that livid-hued cliff of Porto Venere. It was as if she were held aloof from life, which, at times, was not without a charm for her; but there was a touch of gloom and dejection in her feelings, which was unnatural to her and which she could not explain to herself.

It was impossible for her to do what Laurent asked with regard to Palmer; she wrote of him briefly in the highest terms, and conveyed the most affectionate messages from him; but she could not make up her mind to make him a confidant of their relations. She felt disinclined to divulge her real situation, that is to say, to confide to him plans concerning which she had not absolutely made up her own mind. And even if she had decided, would it not have been too early to say to Laurent: "You

near by and of the vast marshes, possession of which the hand of the husbandman disputes with the waters of the sea. Here there is no water on shore to annoy us; we have only the sea and the bare rock, consequently no insects, and not a blade of grass; but such golden and purple clouds, such sublime tempests, such solemn calms! The sea is a picture which changes in color and feeling at every moment of the day and night. There are chasms here filled with uproars of which you cannot conceive the terrifying variety; the sobbing of despair, the imprecations of hell, seem to have appointed a meeting there, and, from my little window, at night, I hear those voices of the abyss, sometimes roaring a nameless bacchanalian refrain, sometimes singing wild hymns, awe-inspiring even in their mildest form.

“And I love all this now, I who always cherished rustic tastes and a love for tranquil little green nooks. Is it because in that fatal love-affair I became accustomed to storms and to a craving for tumult? Perhaps so. We women are such strange creatures! I must confess to you, my own beloved, that many days passed before I could accustom myself to the absence of my daily torment. I did not know what to do with myself, having nobody to wait upon and nurse. Palmer would have done well to be a little overbearing; but observe my injustice: as soon as he showed signs of being so, I rebelled, and now that he has become as kind as an angel once more, I don’t know how to deal with the horrible ennui that assails me now and again. Woe is me! that is the truth.—And must I tell you? No, it is better that I should not find out myself, or if I do, that I should not grieve you with my madness. I intended to write of nothing but the country, my walks, my occupations, and my dull chamber under the roof, or rather on the roof, where I

take pleasure in being alone, unknown, forgotten by the world, with no duties, no customers, no business, no other work than that which it pleases me to do. I get little children to pose for me, and I amuse myself arranging them in groups; but all this will not satisfy you, and if I don't tell you where I stand with regard to my heart and my desires, you will be more anxious than ever. Very well; it is a fact that I have fully decided to marry Palmer, and that I love him; but I have not yet been able to make up my mind to appoint a time for the marriage; I fear for him and for myself the morrow of that indissoluble union. I have passed the age of illusions, and after such a life as mine one has had a hundred years of experience and consequently of terrors! I believed that I was absolutely severed from Laurent, and so, in fact, I was, at Genoa, on the day that he told me I was his scourge, the assassin of his genius and his glory. But now I no longer feel so entirely independent of him; since his sickness, his repentance, and the letters he has written me during these last two months, letters adorable in their gentleness and resignation, I feel that a solemn duty still binds me to that ill-fated child, and I am reluctant to wound him by a complete desertion. And yet that is just what is likely to happen on the day after my marriage. Palmer has had a moment's jealousy, and that jealousy may return on the day that he has the right to say to me: *I wish it!* I no longer love Laurent, my beloved, I swear it, I would rather die than love him; but on the day that Palmer seeks to break the friendship which has survived that unhappy passion in my heart, perhaps I shall cease to love Palmer.

"I have told him all this; he understands it, for he prides himself on being a great philosopher, and he persists in believing what seems fair and right to him to-day

will never bear a different aspect in his eyes. I believe it also, and yet I ask him to allow the days to pass, without counting them, and without disturbing our present calm and pleasant situation. I have attacks of spleen, it is true; but Palmer is not naturally very keen-sighted, and I can conceal them from him. I can wear before him what Laurent used to call my sick bird's face, without frightening him. If my future suffering is limited to this, that I may have irritated nerves and gloomy thoughts without his noticing it or being affected by it, we can live together as happily as possible. If he should begin to scrutinize my absent-minded glances, to seek to pierce the veil of my reveries, to do, in short, all the cruel, childish things with which Laurent used to overwhelm me in my hours of moral weakness, I feel that I have not the strength to struggle longer, and I should prefer that he would kill me at once; it would be done with the sooner."

About the same time, Thérèse received from Laurent so ardent a letter that she was alarmed by it. It was no longer the enthusiasm of friendship, but of love. The silence that Thérèse had maintained concerning her relations with Palmer had restored the artist's hope of renewing his intimacy with her. He could not live without her; he had made vain efforts to return to a life of pleasure. Disgust had seized him by the throat.

"Ah! Thérèse," he said, "I used to reproach you for loving too chastely and for being better adapted for the convent than for love. How could I have blasphemed thus? Since I have been trying to renew my acquaintance with vice, I feel myself that I am becoming as pure as in my childhood, and the women I see tell me that I would make a good monk. No, no, I shall never forget

what there was between us above and beyond love, that motherly gentleness which watched over me for long hours with a placid, melting smile, those outpourings of the heart, those aspirations to a higher intelligence, that twofold poem of which we were the authors and the characters, without realizing it. Thérèse, if you do not belong to Palmer, you cannot belong to any one but me! with what other man can you find again those profound, ardent emotions? Were all our days unhappy? Were there not some delicious ones? Besides, is it happiness that you seek, you, the self-sacrificing woman? Can you do without suffering for some one, and did you not call me sometimes, when you pardoned my follies, your dear torment, your necessary torment? Remember, remember, Thérèse! You suffered, and you are alive. I made you suffer, and I am dying! Have I not atoned sufficiently? Three long months of death-agony for my heart!"

Then came reproaches. Thérèse had said too much or too little. Her expressions of friendship were too warm if it was only friendship, too cold and too reserved if it was love. She must have the courage either to give him new life or to kill him.

Thérèse decided to reply that she loved Palmer, and that she expected to love him forever, but did not speak of the projected marriage, which she could not make up her mind to consider as definitely decided upon. She softened as much as she could the blow that that confession was certain to deal to Laurent's pride.

"Understand," she said, "that it is not, as you claimed, to *punish* you, that I have given my heart and my life to another. No, you were fully forgiven on the day that

I responded to Palmer's affection, and I proved it by hurrying to Florence with him. Do you think, my poor child, that, when I nursed you as I did during your illness, I was there simply as a Sister of Charity? No, no, it was not duty that tied me to your bedside, but a mother's affection. Does not a mother always forgive? Well, it will be always so with me, as you will see! Whenever, without failing in my duty to Palmer, I can serve you, nurse you, and comfort you, you will find me ready. It is because Palmer makes no objection to that, that I am able to love him and do love him. If it had been necessary for me to pass from your arms into those of your enemy, I should have had a horror of myself; but it was just the opposite. Our hands met as we swore to each other that we would watch over you, would never abandon you."

Thérèse showed this letter to Palmer, who was deeply moved by it, and insisted upon writing to Laurent himself, to make similar promises of constant solicitude and true affection.

Laurent made them wait for another letter from him. He had begun to dream a new dream, and saw it fly away beyond hope of recall. He was deeply affected at first; but he resolved to shake off the sorrow which he felt that he had not the strength to bear. There took place in him one of those sudden and complete revolutions which were sometimes the scourge, sometimes the salvation, of his life; and he wrote to Thérèse:

"Bless you, my adored sister; I am happy, I am proud of your faithful friendship, and Palmer's cordial words moved me to tears. Why did you not speak sooner, bad girl? I should not have suffered so keenly. What did

I crave, in truth? To know that you were happy, nothing more. It was because I thought that you were alone and sad, that I came and knelt again at your feet, and said: 'Since you are suffering, let us suffer together. I long to share your sorrows, your vexations, and your solitude.'—Was not that my duty and my right?—But you are happy, Thérèse, therefore so am I. I bless you for telling me. At last, I am delivered from the remorse that was gnawing at my heart! I can walk with my head erect, breathe freely, and say to myself that I have not marred and ruined the life of the best of friends. Ah! I am full of pride to feel within me this generous joy, instead of the horrible jealousy that formerly tortured me!

"Dear Thérèse, dear Palmer, you are my two guardian angels. You have brought me happiness. Thanks to you, I feel at last that I was born for something different from the life I have led. I am born again, I feel the air of heaven descend into my lungs, which thirst for a pure atmosphere. My being is transformed. I am going to love.

"Yes, I am going to love, I love already! I love a pure and lovely child who knows nothing of my love as yet, and in whose presence I take a mysterious pleasure in guarding the secret of my heart, and in appearing and acting as artless, as gay, as child-like as herself. Ah! how lovely they are, these first days of a newly-born emotion! Is there not something sublime and terrifying in this idea: 'I am going to betray myself, that is to say, I am going to give myself away! to-morrow, perhaps to-night, I shall cease to belong to myself!'

"Rejoice, my Thérèse, in this conclusion of your poor child's sad and insane youth. Say to yourself that this rehabilitation of a creature who seemed lost, and who,

instead of crawling about in the mire, now spreads his wings like a bird, is the work of your love, your gentleness, your patience, your anger, your sternness, your forgiveness, and your friendship! Yes, it required all the changing scenes of a private drama in which I was vanquished to force me to open my eyes. I am your handiwork, your son, your labor and your reward, your martyrdom and your crown. Bless me, both of you, my friends, and pray for me: I am going to love!"

All the rest of the letter was in this strain. On receiving this hymn of joy and gratitude, Thérèse felt for the first time that her own happiness was complete and assured. She held out both hands to Palmer, and said: "And now, when and where shall we be married?"

XI

It was decided that the marriage should take place in America. Palmer looked forward with intense delight to presenting Thérèse to his mother, and receiving the nuptial benediction before her eyes. Thérèse's mother could not promise to be present, even if the ceremony should take place in France. She was compensated for the disappointment by the joy she felt in the knowledge that her daughter was pledged to a sensible and devoted man. She could not endure Laurent, and she was always in mortal terror that Thérèse would fall under his yoke again.

The *Union* was making preparations for her voyage. Captain Lawson offered to take Palmer and his fiancée as passengers. Everybody on board was overjoyed at

the prospect of crossing the ocean with that favorite couple. The young ensign atoned for his impertinence by maintaining a most respectful attitude toward Thérèse, and conceiving the most sincere esteem for her.

Thérèse, having made all her preparations to sail on August 18th, received a letter from her mother begging her to come first to Paris, if for no more than twenty-four hours. She had to go thither herself on some family matters. Who could say when Thérèse would return from America? The poor mother was not happy with her other children, who, guided by the example of a suspicious and irritable husband, were insubordinate and cold toward her. So she loved Thérèse all the more dearly, who alone had really been a loving daughter and devoted friend to her. She wished to give her her blessing and to embrace her, perhaps for the last time, for she felt prematurely aged, sick, and fatigued by a life of constant insecurity and without love.

Palmer was more disturbed by this letter than he cared to confess. Although he had always referred with apparent satisfaction to the certainty of a lasting friendship between Laurent and himself, he had not ceased to be anxious, in spite of himself, touching the sentiments which might spring to new life in Thérèse's heart when she should see him again. Not that he was conscious of this anxiety when he asserted the contrary; but he became conscious of it on the 18th of August, when the guns of the American man-of-war woke the echoes of the gulf of Spezzia with repeated farewell salutes, throughout the day.

Each report made him jump, and, at the last one, he wrung his hands until he nearly cracked the joints.

Thérèse was surprised. She had had no suspicion of Palmer's uneasiness since the explanation they had had

together at the beginning of their residence in that neighborhood.

"*Mon Dieu!* what is the matter?" she cried, watching him closely. "What presentiment——"

"Yes! that is it," replied Palmer, hastily. "I have a presentiment—about Lawson, my friend from boyhood. I don't know why.—Yes, yes, it is a presentiment!"

"Do you think that something will happen to him at sea?"

"Perhaps. Who can tell? However, you will not be exposed to it, thank Heaven, as we are going to Paris."

"The *Union* is to touch at Brest, and remain there a fortnight. Are we not going to join her there?"

"Yes, yes, to be sure, unless some catastrophe happens between now and then."

Palmer continued downcast and depressed, nor could Thérèse imagine what was going on in his mind. How could she have imagined? Laurent was taking the waters at Baden; Palmer knew it perfectly well. Moreover, Laurent had his own marriage plans as he had written.

They set off by post the next day, and returned to France by Turin and Mont Cenis, stopping nowhere on the way.

The journey was extraordinarily dull. Palmer saw signs of disaster everywhere; he confessed to superstitions and mental foibles which were entirely foreign to his character. Ordinarily so placid and so mild a master, he indulged in savage fits of temper against the postilions, against the roads, against the customs officers, against the passers-by. Thérèse had never seen him in such a mood. She could not refrain from telling him so. He answered with meaningless words, but with so sombre an expression and so marked an accent of irritation, that she was afraid of him, and consequently of the future.

Some lives are pursued by an implacable destiny. While Thérèse and Palmer were returning to France by Mont Cenis, Laurent was returning thither by Geneva. He reached Paris some hours in advance of them, his mind engrossed by a painful anxiety. He had discovered at last that Thérèse, to make it possible for him to travel for a few months, had parted with every sou that she then possessed, and he had learned (for everything comes to light sooner or later) from a person who had visited Spezzia at that time, that Mademoiselle Jacques was living at Porto Venere in extraordinarily straitened circumstances, and was making lace to pay for her lodgings at the rate of six francs per month.

Humiliated and repentant, angry and hopeless, he determined to learn the exact truth with reference to Thérèse's present situation. He knew that she was too proud to consent to accept anything from Palmer, and he said to himself, reasonably enough, that if she had not been paid for the work she did at Genoa, she must have sold her furniture in Paris.

He hurried to the Champs-Élysées, trembling lest he should find strangers installed in that dear little house, which he could not approach without a violent beating of the heart. As there was no concierge, he had to ring at the garden-gate, and he wondered who would come in answer. He knew nothing of Thérèse's approaching marriage, he did not even know that she was free to marry. The last letter that she had written him touching on that subject had reached Baden the day after his departure.

He was delighted beyond measure when the gate was opened by old Catherine. He leaped on her neck; but his spirits instantly sank when he saw the consternation depicted on the goodwoman's face.

"What have you come here for?" she said, angrily. "Have you found out that mademoiselle is coming to-day? Can't you leave her in peace? Have you come to make her miserable again? They told me that you had separated, and I was glad of it; for, although I was fond of you at first, I had grown to detest you. I saw plainly enough that you were the cause of her troubles and her sorrows. Come, come, don't stay here waiting for her, unless you have made a vow to kill her!"

"You say that she is coming to-day!" Laurent exclaimed again and again.

That was all that he had heard of the old servant's lecture. He entered Thérèse's studio, the small lilac salon, and even the bedroom, raising the gray covers that Catherine had spread over all the furniture to preserve it. He gazed at all those rare and fascinating things one by one, artistic, dainty objects which Thérèse had bought with the fruits of her toil; not one was missing. There seemed to have been no change in Thérèse's Parisian environment, and Laurent repeated in a slightly bewildered tone, looking at Catherine, who was following him step by step, with an anxious air:

"She is coming to-day!"

When he said that he loved a lovely child with a love as pure and fair as she, Laurent had boasted unduly. He had believed that he was telling the truth when he wrote to Thérèse, with the passionate warmth to which he was wont to give way when speaking to her of himself, and which contrasted so strangely with the cold and mocking tone he felt called upon to adopt in society. The declaration he was supposed to have made to the young woman who had filled his dreams, he had not made. A bird or a cloud, passing through the sky at night, had sufficed to overthrow the fragile edifice of happiness and passionate

declamation which had sprung up in the morning in that childish, poetic imagination. The fear of making himself ridiculous had taken possession of him, or else the fear of being cured of his invincible and fatal passion for Thérèse.

He remained there, making no reply to Catherine, who, being in haste to prepare everything for her dear mistress's arrival, decided to leave him alone. Laurent was agitated beyond expression. He asked himself why Thérèse was returning to Paris without telling him. Was she coming secretly with Palmer, or had she done as Laurent had done himself? Had she announced to him a happiness which had no existence, and the thought of which had already vanished? Did not this sudden and mysterious return conceal a rupture with Dick?

Laurent was at once overjoyed and terrified by the thought. A thousand contrary ideas and emotions wrangled in his brain and in his nerves. There was a moment when he himself insensibly forgot the reality, and persuaded himself that those linen-covered objects were tombs in a cemetery. He had always had a horror of death, and his mind dwelt constantly upon it, in spite of himself. He saw it about him in all its forms. He fancied that he was surrounded by shrouds, and sprang to his feet in terror, crying:

"Who is dead, then? Is it Thérèse? is it Palmer? I see, I feel that some one is dead in this neighborhood to which I have returned!—No, it is you," he replied, talking to himself, "it is you, who have lived in this house the only real days of your life, and who return hither lifeless, abandoned, forgotten, like a corpse!"

Catherine returned, unnoticed by him, removed the coverings, dusted the furniture, threw all the windows and blinds wide open, and placed flowers in the great

china vases which stood on gilt consoles. Then she approached him, and said:

"Well, what are you doing here?"

Laurent came out of his dream, and, looking about him in a dazed sort of way, saw the flowers reflected in the mirrors, the Boule cabinets glistening in the sun, and the whole holiday aspect which had succeeded, as if by magic, the funereal atmosphere of absence, which does, in truth, so closely resemble death.

His hallucination took another course.

"What am I doing here?" he said, smiling darkly; "true, what am I doing here? To-day is a holiday in Thérèse's house, a day of joy and oblivion. Evidently the mistress of this house has appointed a rendezvous here to-day, and certainly it is not I whom she expects, I, a dead man! What business has a corpse in this nuptial chamber? And what will she say when she sees me here? She will say, as you do, poor old woman; she will say: 'Begone! your place is in a coffin!'"

Laurent talked as if he were in a fever. Catherine felt sorry for him.

"He is mad," she thought; "he always was."

And as she was thinking what she should say to send him away quietly, she heard a carriage stop in the street. In her joy at seeing Thérèse again, she forgot Laurent, and hastened to open the door.

Palmer was there with Thérèse; but, being in haste to rid himself of the dust of the journey, and not wishing to give Thérèse the trouble of having the post-chaise unloaded at her door, he stepped in again at once and ordered the postilions to drive him to Hôtel Meurice, saying to Thérèse that he would return in two hours to dine with her, and would bring her trunks.

Thérèse embraced her dear old Catherine, and, while

she questioned her concerning her own health during their separation, entered the house with that impatient curiosity, sometimes joyous, sometimes anxious, which we instinctively feel on returning to a place where we have lived a long while; so that Catherine had no opportunity to tell her that Laurent was there, and she surprised him sitting on the sofa in the salon, pale, absorbed, and, as it were, petrified. He had not heard the carriage, nor the noise of doors hurriedly opened and closed. He was still buried in his dismal meditations when he saw her before him. He uttered a terrible cry, darted toward her to embrace her, and fell, gasping for breath, almost fainting, at her feet.

They had to remove his cravat, and give him ether to inhale. He was suffocating, and his heart beat so violently that his whole body was shaken as by a succession of electric shocks. Thérèse, dismayed to see him thus, thought that he had fallen sick again. However, his youthful vigor soon returned, and she noticed that he had grown stout. He swore a thousand times that he had never been in better health, and that he was overjoyed to find her improved and her eye as clear and bright as on the first day of their love. He knelt before her and kissed her feet to testify his respect and adoration. His outpourings of emotion were so ardent that Thérèse was disturbed, and thought it her duty to remind him at once of her impending departure and her approaching marriage to Palmer.

"What? what's that? what do you say?" cried Laurent, as pale as if the lightning had struck at his feet. "Departure! marriage!—How? why? am I still dreaming? did you say those words?"

"Yes," she replied, "I did say them. I had already written them to you; did you not receive my letter?"

“Departure! marriage!” repeated Laurent; “why, you used to say that it was impossible! Remember! there were days when I regretted that I could not impose silence on people who tore your reputation to pieces, by giving you my name and my whole life. And you always said: ‘Never, never, so long as that man lives!’—Is he dead, pray? or do you love Palmer as you never loved me, since for him you brush aside scruples which I thought well founded, and defy a horrible scandal, which I consider inevitable?”

“The Comte de — is dead, and I am free.”

Laurent was so thunderstruck by this revelation, that he forgot all his schemes of disinterested, fraternal friendship. What Thérèse had foreseen at Genoa, happened under peculiarly distressing conditions. Laurent conceived a most exalted idea of the happiness he might have enjoyed as Thérèse’s husband, and he shed torrents of tears; nor could words of reason or remonstrance produce any effect upon his perturbed and despairing heart. His grief was expressed so vehemently, and his tears were so genuine, that Thérèse could not escape the emotion naturally incident to a pathetic, heart-rending scene. She had never been able to see Laurent suffer without feeling all the compassion of maternal love, reproachful but vanquished. She tried in vain to restrain her own tears. They were not tears of regret, she was not deceived by this vertigo from which Laurent was suffering, and which was nothing more than vertigo; but it acted on her nerves, and the nerves of such a woman were the very fibres of her heart, torn by a pain which she could not understand.

She succeeded finally in calming him, and, by speaking to him gently and affectionately, in persuading him to look upon her marriage as the wisest and best solution for them both. Laurent agreed, with a sad smile.

"Yes," he said, "I should certainly have made a detestable husband, and *he* will make you happy! Heaven owed you that compensation and that reward. You are quite right to thank Heaven for it and to consider that it preserves you from a wretched existence, and me from a remorse worse than the old one. It is because all that is so true, so wise, so logical, and so well arranged, that I am so unhappy!"

And he began to sob afresh.

Palmer entered the house unheard by either of them. He was, in truth, oppressed by a ghastly presentiment, and, albeit entirely without premeditation, he arrived like a jealous man whose suspicions have been aroused, ringing very softly, and walking so that his footsteps made no noise on the floor. He stopped at the door of the salon and recognized Laurent's voice.

"Ah! I was perfectly sure of it!" he said to himself, tearing the glove which he had held in his hand to be put on at the door, apparently to give himself time for reflection before entering. He thought it best to knock.

"Come in!" cried Thérèse hastily, astounded that any one should insult her by knocking at the door of her salon.

When she saw Palmer, she turned pale. What he had done was more eloquent than many words: he suspected her.

Palmer saw that pallor, and could not understand its real cause. He saw also that Thérèse had been weeping, and Laurent's discomposed countenance put the finishing-touch to his agitation. The first glance that the two men exchanged was a glance of hatred and defiance; then they walked toward each other, uncertain whether they should shake hands, or grasp each other by the throat.

At that moment, Laurent was the better and more sincere of the two, for he had spontaneous impulses which

redeemed all his faults. He opened his arms, and embraced Palmer effusively, making no effort to conceal his tears, which were beginning to suffocate him.

"What is all this?" said Palmer, glancing at Thérèse.

"I do not know," she replied, firmly; "I have just told him that we are going to America to be married. It causes him some grief. He apparently thinks that we are going to forget him. Tell him, Palmer, we shall always love him, at a distance as well as near at hand."

"He is a spoiled child!" rejoined Palmer. "He must know that I have but one word, and that I desire your happiness before everything. Must we take him to America, to make him cease grieving and causing you to weep, Thérèse?"

These words were uttered in a tone impossible to describe. It was a tone of paternal affection, blended with an indefinable flavor of profound and unconquerable bitterness.

Thérèse understood. She asked for her hat and shawl, saying to Palmer:

"We will go to dine at a restaurant. Catherine expected nobody but me, and there is not enough dinner in the house for us both."

"You mean for us three," rejoined Palmer, still half-bitter and half-loving.

"But I cannot dine with you," said Laurent, understanding at last what was going on in Palmer's mind. "I must leave you; I will come again to say adieu. What day do you start?"

"In four days," said Thérèse.

"At least!" added Palmer, looking at her with a strange expression; "but that is no reason why we three should not dine together to-day. Do me this favor, Laurent. We will go to the *Frères Provençaux*, and after that

we will take a drive in the Bois de Boulogne. That will remind us of Florence and the *Cascines*. Come, I beg you."

"I am engaged," said Laurent.

"Oh! well, break your engagement," said Palmer. "Here are paper and pens! Write, write, I beg you!"

Palmer spoke in such a decided tone that there was no denying him. Laurent remembered vaguely that it was his old-time peremptory tone. Thérèse wanted him to refuse, and she could have made him understand it with a glance; but Palmer did not take his eyes from her face, and he seemed in a mood to interpret everything in an unfavorable light.

Laurent was very sincere. When he lied, he was the first person deceived. He deemed himself strong enough to face that delicate situation, and it was his straightforward, generous purpose to restore Palmer's former confidence. Unluckily, when the human mind, borne onward by vigorous aspirations, has climbed certain lofty summits, if it is attacked with vertigo, it does not descend gradually, but plunges recklessly down. That is what happened to Palmer. Although the most noble-hearted and loyal of men, he had aspired to control the emotions aroused by a too delicate situation. His strength had betrayed him; who could blame him for it? And he plunged into the abyss, dragging Thérèse and Laurent himself with him. Who would not pity them—all three? All three had dreamed of scaling heaven and of reaching those serene regions where passions have naught of earthliness; but it is not given to man to reach that height; it is much for him to deem himself for an instant capable of loving without doubt or distrust.

The dinner was mortally dismal; although Palmer, who had assumed the rôle of host, made it a point to set before

she would risk her whole life, and that however unjust Palmer might be, she ought to, and would, keep her word to him.

Palmer released her from it at one stroke, after a succession of suspicions more aggravating, because they were unexpressed in words, than all Laurent's insults had been.

One morning, after passing the night concealed in Thérèse's garden, Palmer was about to retire when she appeared near the gate and detained him.

"Well," she said, "you have been watching here six hours; I saw you from my room. Are you convinced that no one came to see me last night?"

Thérèse was angry, and yet, by forcing the explanation Palmer wished to avoid, she hoped to lead him back to confidence in her; but he thought otherwise.

"I see, Thérèse," he said, "that you are tired of me, since you demand a confession after which I should be contemptible in your eyes. And yet it would not have cost you much to close them to a weakness with which I have not annoyed you overmuch. Why do you not let me suffer in silence? Have I insulted you and pursued you with bitter sarcasms? Have I written you volumes of insults, only to come the next day and weep at your feet and make frantic protestations of repentance, reserving the right to begin anew to torture you the next day? Did I ever so much as ask you an indiscreet question? Why could you not sleep quietly last night while I sat on yonder bench, not disturbing your repose by shrieks and tears? Can you not forgive a suffering for which I blush, perhaps, and which, at all events, I have the pride to wish to conceal and know how to? You have forgiven much more in the case of one who had not so much courage."

"I have forgiven him nothing, Palmer, for I have parted from him irrevocably. As for this suffering which you avow, and which you think that you conceal so perfectly, let me tell you that it is as clear as daylight to my eyes, and that I suffer more from it than you do yourself. Understand that it humiliates me profoundly, and that, coming from a strong and thoughtful man like you, it wounds me a hundred times more deeply than the insults of an excited child."

"Yes, yes, of course," rejoined Palmer. "So you are wounded by my fault, and angry with me forever! Well, Thérèse, everything is at an end between us. Do for me what you have done for Laurent: continue to be my friend."

"So you mean to leave me?"

"Yes, Thérèse; but I do not forget that, when you deigned to give me your word, I placed my name, my fortune, and my worldly station at your feet. I have but one word, and I will keep my promise to you; let us be married here, quietly and joylessly, accept my name and half of my income, and then——"

"And then?" echoed Thérèse.

"Then I will go home, I will go to embrace my mother, and you will be free!"

"Is this a threat of suicide?"

"No, on my honor! Suicide is rank cowardice, especially when one has a mother like mine. I will travel, I will start around the world again, and you will hear no more of me!"

Thérèse was shocked by such a proposition.

"This would seem to me a wretched joke, Palmer," she said, "if I did not know you to be a serious man. I prefer to believe that you do not deem me capable of accepting this name and this money which you offer me

as the solution of a case of conscience. Never recur to such a suggestion; I should feel insulted."

"Thérèse! Thérèse!" cried Palmer, violently, squeezing her arm until he bruised the skin, "swear to me, by the memory of the child you lost, that you no longer love Laurent; I will kneel at your feet and implore you to forgive my injustice."

Thérèse withdrew her wounded arm, and gazed at him in silence. She was outraged to the very bottom of her soul that he should exact such an oath from her, and his words seemed to her even more cruel and brutal than the physical pain she had undergone.

"My child," she cried, stifling her sobs, "I swear to you, to you who are in heaven, that no man shall ever debase your poor mother again!"

She rose, went to her room, and locked herself in. She felt so entirely innocent with respect to Palmer, that she could not endure the idea of descending to self-justification like a guilty woman. Moreover, she anticipated a horrible future with a man who could brood so long over a deep-rooted jealousy, and who, after he had twice provoked what he thought to be a serious danger for her, attributed his own imprudence to her as a crime. She thought of her mother's ghastly life with a husband who was jealous of the past, and she said to herself, justly enough, that, after she had had the misfortune to be subjected to a passion like Laurent's, she had been insane to believe in the possibility of happiness with another man.

Palmer had a reserve store of good sense and pride which did not allow him to hope to make Thérèse happy after such a scene as had just occurred. He felt that his jealousy would never be cured, and he persisted in believing that it was well-founded. He wrote to Thérèse:

“Forgive me, my friend, if I have pained you; but it is impossible for me not to realize that I was about to drag you down into an abyss of despair. You love Laurent, you have always loved him in spite of yourself, and in all probability you will always love him. It is your destiny. I tried to relieve you from it; you tried with me. I also realize that in accepting my love you were sincere, and that you did your utmost to respond to it. I indulged in many illusions, but I have felt them slipping from me every day since we left Florence. If he had persisted in being ungrateful, I should have been saved; but his repentance and gratitude touched your heart. I myself was touched by them, and yet I strove to believe that I was perfectly calm. It was of no avail. Thenceforth there were between you, because of me, sorrows of which you never told me, but which I divined. He recurred to his former love for you, and you, although you fought against the feeling, regretted that you belonged to me. Alas! Thérèse, that was the time when you should have retracted your promise. I was ready to give it back to you. I left you at liberty to go with him from Spezzia: why did you not do it?

“Forgive me; I rebuke you for having suffered terribly to make me happy and to become attached to me. I have fought hard, too, I promise you! And now, if you care to accept my devotion, I am ready to struggle and suffer anew. Tell me if you are yourself willing to suffer, and if, by going with me to America, you hope to be cured of this wretched passion which threatens you with a pitiable future. I am ready to take you with me; but let us say no more of Laurent, I implore you, and do not look upon it as a crime on my part to have guessed the truth. Let us remain friends, come and live with my mother, and if, a few years hence, you find me not unworthy of you,

accept my name and a permanent home in America, with no thought of ever returning to France.

“ I will wait in Paris a week for your reply.

“ RICHARD.”

Thérèse rejected an offer which wounded her pride. She still loved Palmer, and yet she felt so insulted by the offer to take her as a favor when she had no reason to reproach herself, that she concealed the pain that tore her heart. She felt, too, that she could not resume any sort of connection with him without prolonging a torture which he no longer had the strength to dissemble, and that their life thenceforth would be a constant struggle or constant misery. She left Paris with Catherine, telling no one where she was going, and hid herself in a small country-house in the provinces, which she hired for three months.

XII

Palmer sailed for America, bearing with dignity a very deep wound, but utterly unable to admit that he had been mistaken. He had an obstinate streak in his mind, which sometimes reacted upon his disposition, but only to make him do this or that thing with resolution, not to make him persist in a painful and really difficult undertaking. He had believed that he was capable of curing Thérèse of her fatal love, and he had performed that miracle by his enthusiastic and, if you please, imprudent faith; but he lost the fruit just as he was on the point of plucking it, because, when the last test came, his faith failed him.

It should be said also, that, in establishing a genuine, serious connection between two persons, nothing can be more unfortunate than an attempt to take possession too quickly of a heart that has been broken. The dawn of such a connection is attended by the noblest illusions; but jealousy of the past is an incurable disease, and stirs up storms which even old age does not always dispel.

If Palmer had been a really strong man, or if his strength had been calmer and less unreasoning, he might have saved Thérèse from the disasters that he foresaw for her. It was his duty to do it, perhaps, for she had confided herself to him with a sincerity and disinterestedness worthy of solicitude and respect; but many who aspire to strength of character and believe that they possess it possess nothing more than energy, and Palmer was one of those as to whom one may be mistaken for a long while. Such as he was, he surely deserved Thérèse's regrets. We shall see ere long that he was capable of the noblest impulses and the bravest deeds. His whole mistake consisted in believing in the unassailable duration of that which in him was simply a spontaneous effort of the will.

Laurent knew nothing at first of Palmer's departure for America; he was dismayed to find that Thérèse, too, had gone away without bidding him adieu. He had received from her only these few words:

"You are the only person in France who knew of my projected marriage to Palmer. The marriage is broken off. Keep our secret. I am going away."

As she wrote these ice-cold words to Laurent, Thérèse was conscious of a bitter feeling toward him. Was not that fatal child the cause of all the misfortunes and all the sorrows of her life?

She soon felt, however, that this time her irritation was unjust. Laurent had behaved admirably toward both Palmer and herself during that wretched week which had ruined everything. After the first outburst, he had accepted the situation with perfect good faith, and had done his utmost not to give offence to Palmer. He had not once sought to take advantage with Thérèse of her fiancé's unjust suspicions. He had never failed to speak of him with respect and affection. By a strange concatenation of circumstances, it was he who had the dignified rôle during that week. And Thérèse could not help realizing that, although Laurent was sometimes insane to the point of downright atrocity, his mind was never open to any base or despicable thought.

During the three months which followed Palmer's departure, Laurent continued to show that he was worthy of Thérèse's friendship. He had succeeded in discovering her retreat, and he did nothing to disturb her tranquillity. He wrote to her, complaining mildly of the coldness of her adieu, and reproaching her for not having confidence in him in her sorrows, for not treating him like a brother; "was he not created and brought into the world to serve her, to console her, to avenge her at need?" Then followed questions to which Thérèse was forced to reply. Had Palmer insulted her? Should he go to him and demand satisfaction? Did I do anything imprudent, which wounded you? Have you any reproach to bring against me? God knows, I did not think it! If I am the cause of your suffering, scold me, and if I am not the cause of it, tell me that you will allow me to weep with you.

Thérèse justified Richard without entering into any explanations. She forbade Laurent to mention his name to her. In her generous determination to leave no stain on her fiancé's memory, she allowed him to believe that she

alone was responsible for the rupture. Perhaps the result was to revive in Laurent's heart hopes which she had no purpose of reviving; but there are situations in which one bungles, whatever one may do, and rushes onward, impelled by fatality, to one's destruction.

Laurent's letters were infinitely gentle and affectionate. He wrote without art, without pretension in the way of style, and often in bad taste and incorrectly. He was sometimes honestly emphatic, and sometimes childish without prudery. With all their defects, his letters were dictated by a depth of conviction which made them irresistibly persuasive, and one could feel in every word the fire of youth and the effervescent energy of an artist of genius.

Moreover, Laurent began to work with great ardor, thoroughly resolved never to return to his former dissolute habits. His heart bled at the thought of the privations Thérèse had imposed upon herself in order to provide him with the variety, the bracing air, and the renewed health of the journey to Switzerland. He had determined to pay his debt at the earliest possible moment.

Thérèse soon began to feel that the affection of her *poor child*, as he still called himself, was very pleasant to her, and that, if it could continue as it was, it would be the best and purest sentiment of his life.

She encouraged him by motherly replies to persevere in the path of toil to which he said that he had returned forever. Her letters were sweet, resigned, and breathed a chaste affection; but Laurent soon detected a strain of mortal sadness in them. Thérèse admitted that she was slightly ill, and she sometimes had thoughts of death at which she laughed with heart-rending melancholy. She was really ill. Without love and without work, *ennui* was consuming her. She had carried with her a small

sum of money, which was all that remained of what she had earned at Genoa, and she used it with the strictest economy, in order to remain in the country as long as possible. She had conceived a horror of Paris. And then it is possible that there had gradually stolen over her a longing and at the same time a sort of dread to see Laurent once more, changed, resigned, and improved in every way, as his letters showed him to be.

She hoped that he would marry; as he had once had an inclination in that direction, that excellent plan might occur to him again. She encouraged him to do it. He said sometimes *yes* and sometimes *no*. Thérèse constantly anticipated that some trace of the old love would appear in Laurent's letters: it did crop out a little now and then, but always with exquisite delicacy; and the prevailing characteristic of these veiled references to ill-disguised sentiment was a delightful tenderness, an effusive sensibility, a sort of ardent filial devotion.

When the winter arrived, Thérèse, finding that she had come to the end of her resources, was obliged to return to Paris, where her patrons were and her duties to herself. She concealed her return from Laurent, preferring not to see him again too soon; but, impelled by some mysterious power of divination, he passed through the unfrequented street on which the little house stood. He saw that the shutters were down, and he went in, drunk with joy. It was an ingenuous, almost child-like joy, which would have made a suspicious, reserved attitude utterly ridiculous and prudish. He left Thérèse to dine alone, begging her to come in the evening to his studio, to see a picture which he had just finished and upon which he was absolutely determined to have her opinion before sending it away. It was sold and paid for; but, if she had any criticism to make upon it, he would work

at it a few days more. The deplorable days had passed when Thérèse "was no connoisseur, when she had the narrow, realistic judgment peculiar to portrait-painters, when she was incapable of comprehending a work of the imagination," etc. Now she was "his muse and his inspiration. Without the aid of her divine breath, he could do nothing. With her advice and encouragement, his talent would fulfil all its promises."

Thérèse forgot the past, and, while she was not too much bewildered by the present, she did not think that she ought to refuse what an artist never refuses a fellow-artist. After dinner, she took a cab and went to Laurent's studio.

She found the studio illuminated, and the picture in a magnificent light. It was a most excellent and beautiful picture. That peculiar genius had the faculty of making, while in repose, more rapid progress than is always attained by those who work most persistently. As a result of his travelling and his illness, there had been a gap of a year in his work, and it seemed that, by reflection simply, he had thrown off the defects of his earlier exuberance of fancy. At the same time, he had acquired new qualities which one would hardly have deemed consistent with his nature—accuracy of drawing, more agreeable choice of subjects, charm of execution—everything that was likely to please the public without lowering him in the estimation of artists.

Thérèse was touched and enchanted. She expressed her admiration in the warmest terms. She said to him everything that she deemed best adapted to make the noble pride of talent vanquish all the wretched enthusiasms of the past. She found nothing to criticise, and even forbade him to retouch any part of it.

Laurent, albeit modest in manners and language, had more pride than Thérèse gave him credit for. In the

depth of his heart he was enraptured by her praise. He had a feeling that she was the shrewdest and most conscientious of all those who were capable of appreciating him. He felt, too, a violent recrudescence of the old longing for her to share his artistic joys and sorrows, and that hope of becoming a master, that is to say, a man, which she only could revive in his moments of weakness.

When Thérèse had gazed a long while at the picture, she turned to look at a figure as to which Laurent desired her opinion, saying that she would be even more pleased with it; but, instead of a canvas, Thérèse saw her mother, with smiling face, standing in the doorway of Laurent's chamber.

Madame C—— had come to Paris, not knowing just what day Thérèse would return. This visit was occasioned by serious business: her son was to be married, and Monsieur C—— himself had been in Paris for some time. Thérèse's mother having learned from her that she had renewed her correspondence with Laurent, and dreading the future, had called upon him unexpectedly to say to him all that a mother can say to a man, to prevent his making her daughter unhappy.

Laurent was gifted with eloquence of the heart. He had reassured this poor mother, and had detained her, saying:

"Thérèse is coming here, and I propose to swear to her at your feet that I will always be to her whichever she may choose, her brother or her husband, but in any event her slave."

It was a very pleasant surprise for Thérèse to find her mother there, for she did not expect to see her so soon. They embraced with tears of joy. Laurent led them to a small salon filled with flowers, where tea was served in sumptuous fashion. Laurent was rich, he had just earned

ten thousand francs. He was proud and happy to be able to repay Thérèse all that she had expended for him. He was adorable that evening; he won the daughter's heart and the mother's confidence, and yet he had the delicacy not to say a word of love to Thérèse. Far from that, as he kissed the clasped hands of the two women, he exclaimed with absolute sincerity that that was the loveliest day of his life, and that never had he felt so happy and so self-contented when he and Thérèse were alone.

Madame C—— first broached the subject of marriage to Thérèse some days later. That poor woman, who had sacrificed everything to external appearances, who, despite her domestic sorrows, believed that she had done well, could not endure the idea of her daughter being cast off by Palmer, and she thought that Thérèse might set herself right in the eyes of the world by making another choice. Laurent was famous and much in vogue. Never could there be a better assorted marriage. The young but great artist had reformed. Thérèse possessed an influence over him which had dominated the most violent crisis of his painful transformation. He had an unconquerable attachment for her. It had become a duty on the part of both of them to weld anew and forever a chain which had never been completely severed, and which could never be, strive as hard as they might.

Laurent excused his past offences by very specious reasoning. Thérèse, he said, had spoiled him at the outset by too great gentleness and resignation. If, at the time of his first ingratitude, she had shown that she was offended, she would have corrected his wretched habit, contracted with low women, of yielding to his impulses and his caprices. She would have taught him the respect a man owes to the woman who has given herself to him through love.

Another consideration, too, which Laurent made the most of in his defence, and which seemed more weighty, was this, which he had already suggested in his letters.

"Probably," he said to her, "I was ill, although I did not know it, when I wronged you the first time. A brain-fever seems to strike you like the lightning, and yet it is impossible to believe that in a young, strong man there has not taken place, perhaps long beforehand, a terrible revolution by which his reason has already been disturbed, and under which his will has been unable to react. Is not that just what took place in me, my poor Thérèse, when that sickness was coming on which nearly killed me? Neither you nor I could understand it; and, as for myself, it often happened that I woke in the morning and thought of your grief of the preceding day, unable to distinguish between the dreams I had just dreamed and the reality. You know that I could not work, that the place where we were aroused an unhealthy aversion in my mind, that I had had an extraordinary hallucination in the forest of —; and that, when you gently reproached me for certain cruel words and certain unjust accusations, I listened to you with a dazed air, thinking that you were the one who had dreamed it all. Poor woman! I accused you of being mad! You must see that I was mad, and can you not forgive involuntary offences? Compare my conduct after my illness with what it was before! Was it not like a reawakening of my heart? Did you not suddenly find me as trustful, as submissive, as devoted, as I had been cynical, irritable, and selfish, before that crisis which restored me to my senses? And have you had any reason to reproach me from that moment? Did I not bow to your marriage to Palmer as a punishment I had earned? You saw me almost dead with grief at the thought that I was going to lose you forever:

She conceived an exalted idea of moral liberty, and when another's love and faith failed her, she had the righteous pride not to dispute the tattered compact, shred by shred. She even took pleasure in the idea of restoring freedom and repose, generously and without reproach, to whoever reclaimed them.

But she had become much weaker than in her earlier womanhood, in the sense that she had recovered the craving to love and to have faith, which had been long benumbed by a disaster of exceptional severity. She had fancied for a long time that she could live thus, and that art would be her only passion. She had made a mistake, and she could no longer indulge in any illusions concerning the future. It was necessary for her to love, and her greatest misfortune was that it was necessary for her to love gently and self-sacrificingly, and to satisfy at any price the maternal impulse which was, as it were, a fatal element of her nature and her life. She had become accustomed to suffering for some one, she longed to suffer still, and if that longing, strange, it is true, but well characterized in certain women, and in certain men as well, had made her less merciful to Palmer than to Laurent, it was because Palmer had seemed to her too strong himself to need her devotion. So that Palmer had erred in offering her support and consolation. Thérèse had missed the feeling that she was necessary to that man, who wished her to think of no one but herself.

Laurent, who was more ingenuous, had that peculiar charm of which she was fatally enamored—weakness! He made no secret of it, he proclaimed that touching infirmity of his genius with transports of sincerity and inexhaustible emotion. Alas! he, too, erred. He was not really weak, any more than Palmer was really strong. He had his hours, he always talked like a child of heaven,

and as soon as his weakness had won the day, he recovered his strength to make others suffer, as is the wont of all the children whom we adore.

Laurent was in the clutches of an inexorable fatality. He said so himself in his lucid moments. It seemed as if, born of the intercourse of two angels, he had nursed at the breast of a Fury, and had retained in his blood a leaven of frenzy and despair. He was one of those persons, more plentiful than is generally supposed in the human race, in both sexes, who, although endowed with all sublimity of thought and all the noble impulses of the heart, never attain the full extent of their faculties without falling at once into a sort of intellectual epilepsy.

And then, too, he was, like Palmer, inclined to undertake the impossible, which is to try to graft happiness upon despair, and to taste the divine joys of conjugal faith and of sacred friendship upon the ruins of a newly devastated past. Those two hearts, bleeding from the wounds they had received, were sadly in need of repose: Thérèse implored it with the sorrow born of a ghastly presentiment; but Laurent fancied that he had lived ten centuries during the ten months of their separation, and he became ill with the exuberance of a desire of the heart, which should have terrified Thérèse more than a desire of the senses.

Unfortunately, she allowed herself to be reassured by the nature of that desire. Laurent seemed to be so far regenerated as to have restored moral love to the place it should occupy in the front rank, and he was once more alone with Thérèse, but did not worry her as before by his outbreaks of frenzy. He was able to talk with her for hours at a time with the most sublime affection—he who had long believed that he was dumb, he said, and who at last felt his genius spreading its wings and taking its

flight to a loftier realm! He made himself a part of Thérèse's future by constantly pointing out to her that she had a sacred duty to perform toward him, the duty of sheltering him from the mad impulses of youth, from the unworthy ambitions of middle life, and the depraved selfishness of old age. He talked to her of himself, always of himself. Why not? He talked so well! Through her means, he would be a great artist, a great heart, a great man; she owed him that, because she had saved his life! And Thérèse, with the fatal simplicity of loving hearts, came at last to look upon this reasoning as irrefutable, and to regard as a duty what she had at first been implored to grant as a proof of forgiveness.

So Thérèse at last consented to weld anew that fatal chain; but she was happily inspired to postpone the marriage, desiring to test Laurent's resolution on that point, and fearing an irrevocable engagement for his sake. If her own happiness alone had been involved, the imprudent creature would have bound herself forever.

Thérèse's first happiness did not last *a whole week*, as a merry ballad sadly says; the second did not last twenty-four hours. Laurent's reactions were sudden and violent, in proportion to the intensity of his enjoyment. We say his reactions, Thérèse said his *retractations*, and that was the more accurate word. He obeyed that inexorable longing which some young men feel to kill or destroy anything that arouses their passions. These cruel instincts have been observed in men of widely varying natures, and history has stigmatized them as perverse instincts; it would be more just to describe them as instincts perverted either by a disease of the brain contracted amid the surroundings in which the men in question were born, or by the impunity, fatal to the reason, which certain conditions assured them from their

first steps in life. We have heard of young kings murdering fawns to which they seemed to be much attached, solely for the pleasure of seeing their entrails quiver. Men of genius, too, are kings in the environment in which they mature; indeed, they are absolute kings, who are intoxicated by their power. There are some who are tormented by the thirst for domination, and whose joy, when their domination is assured, excites them to frenzy.

Such was Laurent, in whom two entirely distinct natures struggled for mastery. One would have said that two souls, having fought for the privilege of vivifying his body, were engaged in a desperate conflict to drive each other out. Between those contrary impulsions the poor wretch lost his free will, and fell exhausted every day after the victory of the angel or the demon who fought over his body.

And when he analyzed himself, it seemed to him sometimes that he was reading in a book of magic, and could discern with marvellous and appalling lucidity the key to the mysterious spells of which he was the victim.

"Yes," he said to Thérèse, "I am undergoing the phenomenon which the thaumaturgists called *possession*. Two spirits have acquired mastery over me. Is one of them really a good and one an evil spirit? No, I do not think so: the one who terrifies you, the sceptical, violent, frantic one, does ill only because he is not able to do good as he understands it. He would like to be calm, philosophical, playful, tolerant; *the other* does not choose that he shall be so. He wishes to play his part of good angel; he seeks to be fervent, enthusiastic, single-hearted, devoted; and as his adversary mocks at him, denies him, and insults him, he becomes morose and cruel in his turn, so that the two angels together bring forth a demon."

And Laurent said and wrote to Thérèse on this strange subject sentences no less beautiful than appalling, which seemed to be true and to add further privileges to the impunity he had apparently arrogated to himself with respect to her.

All that Thérèse had feared that she would suffer on Laurent's account if she became Palmer's wife, she suffered on Palmer's account when she became for the second time Laurent's companion. Ghastly retrospective jealousy, the worst of all forms of jealousy, because it takes offence at everything and can be sure of nothing, gnawed the unhappy artist's heart and sowed madness in his brain. The memory of Palmer became a spectre, a vampire to him. He obstinately insisted that Thérèse should tell him all the details of her life at Genoa and Porto Venere, and, as she refused, he accused her of having tried to *deceive him!* Forgetting that at that time Thérèse had written to him: *I love Palmer*, and that a little later she had written to him: *I am going to marry him*, he reproached her with having always held in a firm and treacherous hand the chain of hope and desire which bound him to her. Thérèse placed all their correspondence before him, and he admitted that she had said to him all that loyalty called upon her to say to cut him loose from her. He became calmer, and agreed that she had handled his half-extinct passion with excessive delicacy, telling him the whole truth little by little, as he showed a disposition to receive it without pain, and also as she gained confidence in the future toward which Palmer was leading her. He admitted that she had never told him anything resembling a falsehood, even when she had refused to explain herself, and that immediately after his illness, when he was still deluding himself with the idea of a possible reconciliation, she had said to him: "All is

at an end between us. What I have determined upon and accepted for myself is my secret, and you have no right to question me."

"Yes, yes; you are right!" cried Laurent. "I was unjust, and my fatal curiosity is a torment which it is a veritable crime for me to seek to make you share. Yes, dear Thérèse, I subject you to humiliating questions, you who owed me nothing more than oblivion, and who generously granted me a full pardon! I have changed rôles; I draw an indictment against you, forgetting that I am the culprit and the condemned! I try to tear away with an impious hand the veils of modesty in which your heart is entitled, and doubtless in duty bound, to envelop itself touching all that concerns your relations with Palmer. I thank you for your proud silence. I esteem you all the more for it. It proves to me that you never allowed Palmer to question you touching the mysteries of our sorrows and our joys. And now I understand that not only does a woman not owe these private confidences to her lover, but it is her duty to refuse them. The man who asks for them degrades the woman he loves. He calls upon her to do a dastardly thing, at the same time that he debases her in his mind, by associating her image with those of all the phantoms that beset him. Yes, Thérèse, you are right; one must work on his own account to maintain the purity of his ideal; and I am forever straining every nerve to profane it and cast it forth from the temple I had built for it!"

It would seem that after such protestations, and when Laurent declared his readiness to sign them with his blood and his tears, tranquillity should have been restored and happiness have begun. But such was not the case. Laurent, consumed by secret rage, returned the next day to his questions, his insults, his sarcasms. Whole nights

were passed in deplorable disputes, in which it seemed that he had an absolute craving to work upon his own genius with the lash, to wound it and torture it, in order to make it fruitful in abusive language of truly appalling eloquence, and to drive both Thérèse and himself to the uttermost limits of despair. After these hurricanes, there seemed to be nothing left for them to do but to kill themselves together. Thérèse constantly expected it and was always ready, for life was horrible to her; but Laurent had not as yet had that thought. Exhausted by fatigue he would fall asleep, and his good angel seemed to return to watch over his slumber and bring to his face the divine smile of celestial visions.

It was an incredible, but fixed and invariable, rule of that strange character, that sleep changed all his resolutions. If he fell asleep with his heart overflowing with affection, he was sure to wake with his mind eager for battle and murder; and on the other hand, if he had gone away cursing the night before, he would return in the morning to bless.

Three times Thérèse left him and fled from Paris; three times he went after her and forced her to forgive his despair; for as soon as he had lost her he adored her, and began anew to implore her with all the tears of exalted repentance.

Thérèse was at once miserable and sublime in that hell into which she had plunged the second time, closing her eyes and sacrificing her life. She carried devotion to the point of acts of self-immolation which made her friends shudder, and which sometimes brought upon her the blame, almost the scorn, of certain proud and virtuous people who did not know what it is to love.

Moreover, this love of Thérèse for Laurent was incomprehensible to herself. She was not drawn on by her

passions, for Laurent, besmirched by the debauchery into which he plunged anew to kill a love which he could not destroy by his will, had become a more disgusting object than a dead body to her. She no longer had any caresses for him, and he no longer dared ask her for them. She was no longer vanquished and swayed by the charm of his eloquence and the child-like grace of his penitence. She could no longer believe in the morrow; and the superb outbursts of emotion, which had reconciled them so many times, were no longer anything more in her eyes than alarming symptoms of storm and shipwreck.

What attached her to him was that all-embracing compassion which one inevitably acquires as a habit toward those to whom one has forgiven much. Pardon seems to engender pardon even to satiety, to foolish weakness. When a mother has said to herself that her child is incorrigible, and that he must either die or kill some one, there is nothing left for her to do except to abandon him or to accept him as he is. Thérèse had been mistaken every time that she had thought to cure Laurent by abandoning him. It is very true that he seemed to improve at such times, but only because he hoped to obtain his pardon. When he ceased to hope, he plunged recklessly into dissipation and idleness. Then she returned to rescue him, and succeeded in making him work for a few days. But how dearly she had to pay for the little good she succeeded in doing him! When he became disgusted once more with a regular life, he could not find enough invectives with which to reproach her for trying to make of him "what her patron saint Thérèse Levasseur had made of Jean-Jacques," that is to say, according to him, "an idiot and a maniac."

And yet there was in this pity, which he implored so fervently only to insult it as soon as she had given it back

to him, an enthusiastic, perhaps a slightly fanatical respect for his genius as an artist. That woman, whom he accused of being commonplace and lacking in intelligence, when he saw her working for his well-being with simple-hearted perseverance, was superbly artistic, in her love at least, since she accepted Laurent's tyranny as a matter of divine right, and sacrificed to him her own pride, her own labor, and what another less self-sacrificing than she might have called her own glory.

And he, poor wretch, saw and understood that devotion, and when he realized his ingratitude he was consumed by remorse which crushed him. He should have had a heedless, robust mistress, who would have laughed at his anger and his repentance alike, who would not have suffered because of anything he did, so long as she controlled him. Thérèse was not such a woman. She was dying of weariness and disappointment, and Laurent, seeing her fade away, sought momentary forgetfulness of his own tears in the suicide of his intelligence, in the poison of drunkenness.

XIII

One evening, he abused her so long and so incoherently that she ceased to listen to him, and dozed in her chair. After a few moments, a slight rustling made her open her eyes. Laurent convulsively threw on the floor something that gleamed: it was a dagger. Thérèse smiled, and closed her eyes again. She understood feebly, and as if through the haze of a dream, that he had thought of killing her. At that moment, Thérèse was utterly indifferent to

everything. To rest from living and thinking, let that rest be sleep or death—she left the choice to destiny.

Death was what she despised. Laurent thought that it was he, and, as he despised himself, he left her at last.

Three days later, Thérèse, having decided to borrow a sum which would enable her to take a long journey, to leave Paris in earnest,—for such a succession of agitations and hurricanes was spoiling her work and her life,—went to the Quai aux Fleurs and bought a white rose-bush, which she sent to Laurent without giving her name to the messenger. It was her farewell. On returning home, she found there a white rose-bush, sent without a name: that was Laurent's farewell. They both intended to go away—they both remained. The incident of the white rose-bushes moved Laurent to tears. He hurried to Thérèse and found her finishing her packing. Her place was taken in the mail-coach for six o'clock that evening. Laurent's place also was taken in the same coach. Both had thought of visiting Italy again alone. "Well, let us go together!" he cried.

"No, I am not going," said she.

"Thérèse, it's of no use for us to plan! this horrible bond that connects us will never be broken. It is madness to think of it. My love has withstood everything that can crush a sentiment, everything that can break a heart. You must love me as I am, or else we must die together. Are you willing to love me?"

"It would be of no use for me to be willing to do it; I cannot," said Thérèse. "I feel that my heart is exhausted; I think that it is dead."

"Very well; are you willing to die?"

"It is a matter of indifference to me how soon I die, as you know; but I do not wish you to live or die with me."

"Ah! yes, you believe in the eternity of the *ego*! You don't want to meet me again in the other life! Poor martyr! I can understand that."

"We shall not meet again, Laurent, I am sure. Each soul goes toward its centre of attraction. Repose summons me, while you will always and everywhere be attracted by the tempest."

"That is to say that *you* have not earned hell!"

"Nor have you earned it. You will be in another heaven, that is all!"

"What is there left for me in this world, if you leave me?"

"Glory, when you no longer seek love."

Laurent became pensive. Several times he repeated mechanically: "Glory!"—then he knelt in front of the hearth, poking the fire as he was accustomed to do when he wished to be alone with himself. Thérèse went out to countermand the orders for her journey. She was well aware that Laurent would have followed her.

When she returned, she found him very calm and cheerful.

"This world is only a dull comedy," he said; "but why seek to rise above it, since we do not know what there may be higher up, or even if there is anything at all? Glory, at which you laugh in your sleeve, I know very well——"

"I do not laugh at other people's glory."

"What other people?"

"Those who believe in it and love it."

"God knows whether I believe in it, Thérèse, or whether I snap my fingers at it as a mere farce! But one can love a thing of which he knows the trifling value. You love a balky horse that breaks your neck, the tobacco that poisons you, a wretched play that makes you laugh,

and glory, which is only a masquerade! Glory! what is glory to a living artist? Newspaper articles that tear you to pieces and make people talk about you, and laudatory articles that no one reads, for the public is amused only by bitter criticisms, and when its idol is praised to the skies it ceases to care for him at all. And then the groups that gather about a painted canvas, and the monumental orders which fill you with delight and ambition, and leave you half-dead with fatigue, with your ideal unrealized. And then—the Institute—a collection of men who detest you, and who themselves——”

Here Laurent indulged in the most intensely bitter sarcasms, and concluded his dithyramb by saying:

“No matter! such is the glory of this world! We spit upon it, but we cannot do without it, since there is nothing better!”

Their conversation was prolonged until evening, satirical, philosophical, and becoming gradually altogether impersonal. To look at them and listen to them, one would have said that they were two friends, naturally peaceable, who had never quarrelled. This strange situation had occurred several times in the midst of their fiercest storms: when their hearts were silent, their minds still understood each other and agreed.

Laurent was hungry, and asked Thérèse to give him some dinner.

“What about the coach?” she said. “It is almost time for it to start.”

“But you are not going?”

“I shall go if you stay.”

“Very well; then I will go, Thérèse. Adieu!”

He left the house abruptly, and returned an hour later.

“I missed the mail,” he said; “I will go to-morrow. Haven’t you dined yet?”

In her preoccupation Thérèse had forgotten her dinner, which was on the table.

"My dear Thérèse," he said, "grant me one last favor; come to dine somewhere with me, and let us go to some play this evening. I want to be your friend once more, just your friend. That will cure me and be the salvation of both of us. Try me. I will not be jealous, nor exacting, nor even amorous any more. Let me tell you—I have another mistress, a pretty little woman in society, as slender as a linnet, and as white and dainty as a sprig of lily of the valley. She is a married woman. I am a friend of her lover, whom I am playing false. I have two rivals, two deadly perils to defy every time that I obtain a *tête-à-tête*. That is very exciting, and therein lies the whole secret of my love. Thus my passions and my imagination are satisfied there; my heart alone and a free exchange of ideas are what I offer you."

"I refuse them," said Thérèse.

"What! you are vain enough to be jealous of a man whom you no longer love?"

"Surely not! I no longer have my life to give, and I cannot understand such a friendship as you ask of me, without exclusive devotion. Come to see me as my other friends do, I am perfectly willing; but do not ask me for any further private intimacy, even apparent."

"I understand, Thérèse; you have another lover!"

Thérèse shrugged her shoulders and made no reply. He was dying to have her boast to him of some caprice, as he had just boasted to her. His shattered strength was reviving and longed for a fight. He awaited anxiously her response to his challenge, ready to overwhelm her with reproaches and disdain, and perhaps to inform her that he had invented that mistress of his to induce her to betray herself. He could not understand Thérèse's inertness.

He preferred to think that she hated him and deceived him, rather than that he was simply annoying or indifferent to her.

She tired him out by her silence.

"Good-night," he said at last. "I am going to dine, and then to the Opera, if I am not too drunk."

Thérèse, left alone, explored for the thousandth time the fathomless depths of this mysterious destiny. What did it lack of being one of the most beautiful of human destinies? Reason.

"But what is reason?" Thérèse asked herself, "and how can genius exist without it? Is it because it is such a mighty force that it can kill reason and still survive it? Or is reason simply an isolated faculty, whose union with the other faculties is not always necessary?"

She fell into a sort of metaphysical reverie. It had always seemed to her that reason was an assemblage of ideas, and not a single detail; that all the faculties of a perfectly constituted being borrowed something from it and supplied something to it in turn; that it was at once the means and the end; that no masterpiece could evade its law, and that no man could have any real value after he had resolutely trampled reason under foot.

She reviewed in her mind her memories of the great artists of all time, and also of contemporary artists. Everywhere she saw the rigid rules of the true associated with the dream of the beautiful, and yet everywhere there were exceptions, terrifying anomalies, radiant yet blighted faces like Laurent's. Aspiration to the sublime was a disease of Thérèse's epoch and environment. It was a touch of fever which took possession of youth and caused it to despise the normal conditions of happiness as well as the ordinary duties of life. By the force of events, Thérèse was hurled, without desiring or anticipating it,

into that awful circle of the human hell. She had become the companion, the intellectual half, of one of those sublime madmen, one of those unreasoning geniuses; she was a witness of the endless agony of Prometheus, of the recurrent frenzies of Orestes; she felt the recoil of those indescribable sufferings, with no comprehension of their cause, and with no power to find a remedy for them.

And yet God still dwelt in those rebellious, tormented souls, for Laurent became enthusiastic and kindly once more at certain hours, and the pure well-spring of sacred inspiration was not dried up; his talent was not exhausted, perhaps he still had a glorious future before him. Should such a man be abandoned to the assaults of delirium or to the stupor of fatigue?

Thérèse, we say, had skirted that abyss too often not to have been made giddy by it more than once. Her own talent as well as her own character had well-nigh become involved, without her knowledge, in that desperate path. She had known that exaltation of suffering which shows one the miseries of life on a large scale, and which hovers on the boundaries between the real and the imaginary; but, by virtue of a natural reaction, her mind aspired henceforth to the *true*, which is neither one nor the other, neither prosaic fact nor the uncurbed ideal. She felt that there the beautiful was to be found, and that, in order to resume the logical life of the soul, she must seek to live a simple and dignified material life. She reproached herself sternly for having been false to herself so long; and a moment later she reproached herself as sternly for thinking too much of her own lot, in face of the extreme peril by which Laurent was still threatened.

With all its voices, with the voice of friendship as well as that of public opinion, society called to her to rise and

resume possession of herself. That was her duty, according to the world, a term which in such case is equivalent to general order, the interest of society: "Follow the straight road; let those perish who wander from it."—And religion added: "The virtuous and the good for everlasting salvation, the blind and the rebellious for hell!"—Does it matter little to the wise man, pray, that the fool perishes?

Thérèse was shocked at that conclusion.

"On the day that I deem myself the most perfect, the most useful and the best creature on earth," she said to herself, "I will consent to a sentence of death against all others; but if that day does not come, shall I not be more mad than all the other madmen? Back, madness of vanity, the mother of selfishness! Let us continue to suffer for others than ourselves!"

It was almost midnight when she rose from the chair upon which she had sunk, crushed and spiritless, four hours before. Some one rang. A messenger brought a box and a note. The box contained a domino and a black satin mask. The note contained these words in Laurent's handwriting: *Senza veder, senza parlar.*

Without seeing or speaking to each other!—What was the key to that enigma? Did it mean that she should go to the masked ball to amuse him by a commonplace intrigue? Did he mean to try to fall in love with her without knowing her? Was it the fancy of a poet, or the insult of a libertine?

Thérèse sent away the box, and fell back in her chair; but a feeling of uneasiness made it impossible for her to reflect. Ought she not to try every expedient to rescue that victim from his infernal aberrations?

"I will go," she said, "I will follow him step by step. I will see, I will listen to his life away from me, I will

learn how much truth there is in the villainous stories he tells me, whether he loves evil innocently or with affectation, whether he really has depraved tastes or is only seeking to distract his thoughts. Knowing all that I have hitherto tried not to know of him and his vile associates, all that I have striven with disgust to keep from his memory and my imagination, perhaps I shall discover some weak spot, some pretext for curing him of this vertigo."

She remembered the domino Laurent had sent her, although she had barely glanced at it. It was of satin. She sent for one of Naples silk, donned a mask, carefully covered her hair, supplied herself plentifully with bows of ribbon, in order to change her appearance more completely in case Laurent should suspect her identity, and, sending for a carriage, she set out, alone and resolutely, for the Opera ball.

She had never attended one of those functions. The mask was stifling, intolerable to her. She had never tried to disguise her voice, yet she did not wish that her identity should be divined by any one. She glided silently through the corridors, seeking the deserted corners when she was tired of walking, but going on if any one was coming toward her, always pretending to have a definite goal, and succeeding better than she had hoped in remaining alone and unmolested in that hustling crowd.

It was the time when there was no dancing at the Opera ball, and when the only disguise admitted was the black domino. There was therefore a multitude, sombre and solemn in appearance, but probably intent for the most part upon intrigues as immoral as the bacchanalian revels of other functions of the sort, but of a most imposing aspect when seen as a whole from above. And at intervals a blaring orchestra would suddenly begin to play a frantic quadrille, as if the management, at odds with the

police, wished to induce the public to disregard the prohibition; but no one seemed to think of such a thing. The black swarm continued to move slowly and whisper amid the uproar, which ended with a pistol-shot, a strange, fantastic finale, which seemed powerless to dispel the vision of that dismal festival.

For some moments Thérèse was so impressed by the spectacle that she forgot where she was, and fancied herself in the world of depressing dreams. She looked for Laurent, and did not find him.

She ventured into the *foyer*, where the best-known men in Paris were gathered, without masks or other disguises, and, having made the circuit of the room, she was about to retire, when she heard her name mentioned in a corner. She turned and saw the man she had loved so well, seated between two masked damsels, whose voices and accent had that indefinable combination of limpness and sharpness which betrays exhaustion of the senses and bitterness of spirit.

"Well," said one of them, "so you have abandoned your famous Thérèse at last? It seems that she deceived you in Italy, and that you would not believe it."

"He began to suspect it," rejoined the other, "on the day that he succeeded in driving out his fortunate rival."

Thérèse was mortally wounded to see the painful romance of her life laid open to such interpretations, and even more to see Laurent smile, tell those creatures that they did not know what they were saying, and change the subject, with no trace of indignation and apparently without noticing or being disturbed by what he heard. Thérèse would never have believed that he was not even her friend. Now she was sure of it! She remained, and continued to listen; her mask was glued to her face by a cold perspiration.

And yet Laurent said nothing to those girls that all the world might not have overheard. He chattered away, amused by their prattle, and answered them like a well-bred man. They were empty-headed creatures, and more than once he yawned, making a slight effort to conceal it. Nevertheless, he remained there, caring little whether he was seen of all men in such company, letting them pay court to him, yawning with fatigue and not with real *ennui*, absent-minded but affable, and talking to those chance companions as if they were women of the best society, almost dear and genuine friends, associated with pleasant memories of joys which one can avow.

This lasted fully a quarter of an hour. Thérèse still held her place. Laurent's back was turned to her. The bench on which he was sitting stood in the recess of a closed glass door. When the groups wandering along the outer corridors stopped against that door, the black coats and dominos made an opaque background and the glass became a sort of black mirror, in which Thérèse's face was reflected unknown to her. Laurent glanced at her several times without thinking of her; but eventually the immobility of that masked face made him uneasy, and he said to his companions, pointing her out to them in the black mirror:

"Don't you call that mask ghastly?"

"Do we frighten you, pray?"

"No, not you; I know what sort of a nose you have under that bit of satin; but to have a face that you can't divine, that you don't know, glaring at you like that! I am going away, I have had enough of it."

"That is to say," they retorted, "that you have had enough of us."

"No," he said, "I have had enough of the ball. It's stifling here. Don't you want to come to see the snow fall? I am going to the Bois de Boulogne."

"Why, that's enough to kill you!"

"Ah! yes. Is there such a thing as death? Are you coming?"

"Faith, no!"

"Who wants to go to the Bois de Boulogne in a domino with me?" he asked, raising his voice.

A group of black figures swooped down upon him like a flock of bats.

"How much is it worth?" said one.

"Will you paint my portrait?" said another.

"Are we to go on foot or on horseback?" queried a third.

"A hundred francs a head," he replied, "just to walk about in the snow by moonlight. I will follow you at a distance. I want to see the effect. How many of you are there?" he added, after a moment. "Ten! that's hardly enough. But no matter, off we go!"

Three remained behind, saying:

"He hasn't a sou. We shall get inflammation of the lungs, and that will be all."

"You stay behind?" he said. "Seven left! Bravo! a cabalistic number, the seven deadly sins! *Vive Dieu!* I was afraid I should be bored, but there's an idea that saves me."

"Bah!" said Thérèse, "a mere artist's whim! He remembers that he is a painter. Nothing is lost."

She followed the strange party as far as the peristyle, to make sure that the fantastic idea was carried out; but the cold made the most determined draw back, and Laurent allowed himself to be persuaded to abandon the plan. He was asked to substitute a supper for the party.

"Faith," he said, "you are nothing but timid, selfish creatures, just exactly like virtuous women. I am going back into respectable society. So much the worse for you."

But they led him back to the *foyer*, and there ensued between him and other young men who were friends of his, and a party of shameless hussies, such a lively conversation, coupled with such fine projects, that Thérèse, overcome by disgust, withdrew, saying to herself that it was too late. Laurent loved vice; she could do nothing more for him.

Did Laurent really love vice? No: the slave does not love the yoke and the lash; but, when he is a slave through his own fault, when he has allowed his liberty to be stolen from him for lack of a day of courage or prudence, he becomes accustomed to slavery and all its sorrows: he justifies that profound saying of the ancients, that, when Jupiter reduces a man to that condition, he takes away half of his soul.

When bodily slavery was the awful fruit of victory, Heaven so ordained it in pity for the vanquished; but, when it is the mind that is subjected to the lamentable embrace of debauchery, the punishment is inflicted in its entirety. Laurent thoroughly deserved that punishment. He might have redeemed himself. Thérèse, too, had risked half of her soul: he had not profited by it.

As she entered the carriage to return home, a frantic man rushed after her. It was Laurent. He had recognized her, as she left the *foyer*, by an involuntary gesture of horror of which she was unconscious.

"Thérèse, let us go back to the ball," he said. "I want to say to all those men: 'You are brutes!' to all those women: 'You are vile creatures!' I want to shout your name, your sacred name, to that idiotic crowd, to grovel at your feet and bite the dust, calling down upon myself all the scorn, all the insults, all the shame! I want to make my confession aloud in the midst of that vast masquerade, as the early Christians did in the heathen

temples, which were suddenly purified by the tears of repentance, and washed clean by the blood of the martyrs."

This outbreak lasted until Thérèse had taken him to his door. She could not at all understand why and how that man, who was so little intoxicated, so self-controlled, so agreeably loquacious among the damsels of the masked ball, could become passionate to the point of frenzy as soon as she appeared.

"It is I who drive you mad," she said. "A moment ago, those women were talking about me as about any vile creature, and it did not even rouse you. I have become, so far as you are concerned, a sort of avenging spectre. That was not what I wanted. Let us part, therefore, since I can no longer do anything but harm."

XIV

They met again the next day, however. He begged her to give him one last day of fraternal conversation, and to take one last friendly, quiet, *bourgeois* walk with him. They went to the Jardin des Plantes, sat down under the great cedar, and visited the labyrinth. It was a mild day; there were no traces of the snow. The sun shone pale through the light-purple clouds. The buds were already bursting with sap. Laurent was a poet, a contemplative poet and artist, nothing else, that day: a profound, incredible tranquillity; no remorse, no desires, and no hopes; at intervals, flashes of ingenuous gaiety.

Thérèse, who watched him with amazement, could hardly believe that everything was at an end between them.

The next day, there was another terrible tempest, without cause or pretext, precisely as a storm gathers in the summer sky for no other reason than that it was fair the day before.

Then, from day to day, everything became darker and darker, and it was like the end of the world, like continual flashes of lightning in the darkness.

One night, he came to her house very late, in a completely dazed condition, and, having no idea where he was, without a word to her, threw himself on the sofa in the salon, and fell asleep.

Thérèse went into her studio, and prayed to God fervently and despairingly to deliver her from that torture. She was discouraged; her cup was full. She wept and prayed all night.

Day was just breaking when she heard the bell ring at her gate. Catherine was asleep, and Thérèse supposed that some belated passer-by had made a mistake in the house. The ring was repeated, once, twice. Thérèse looked out through the round window in the hall over the front door. She saw a child of ten or twelve years, whose clothes indicated that his family was well-to-do, and whose upturned face seemed like an angel's.

"What is it, my little friend?" she said; "have you lost your way?"

"No," he replied, "I was brought here; I am looking for a lady whose name is Mademoiselle Jacques."

Thérèse ran down, opened the door, and gazed at the child with extraordinary emotion. It seemed to her that she had seen him before, or that he resembled some one whom she knew and whose name she could not remember. The child also seemed confused and undecided.

She led him into the garden to question him; but, instead of answering her questions, he asked: "Are you Mademoiselle Thérèse?" while trembling from head to foot.

"I am, my child; what do you want with me? what can I do for you?"

"You must take me and keep me with you, if you will have me!"

"Who are you? Pray tell me!"

"I am the son of the Comte de ——"

Thérèse restrained a cry, and her first impulse was to spurn the child; but suddenly she was struck by his resemblance to a face she had recently painted, looking at it in a mirror, in order to send it to her mother; and that face was her own.

"Wait!" she cried, taking the boy in her arms with a convulsive movement. "What is your name?"

"Manuel."

"Oh! *Mon Dieu!* who is your mother?"

"She is—I was told not to tell you right away! My mother used to be the Comtesse de ——, at Havana; she didn't love me, and she used often to say to me: 'You are not my son, I am not obliged to love you.'—But my papa loved me, and he often said to me: 'You are all mine, you haven't any mother.'—Then he died a year and a half ago, and the countess said: 'You belong to me and you are going to stay with me.'—That was because my father left her some money on condition that I should always be known as their son. But she didn't love me any better, and I was very unhappy with her, when a gentleman from the United States, whose name is Monsieur Richard Palmer, came all of a sudden and asked for me. The countess said: 'No, I am not willing.'—Then Monsieur Palmer said to me: 'Do you want me to take

you to your real mother, who thinks you are dead, and who will be very happy to see you again?"—I said: 'Yes, indeed I do!' Then Monsieur Palmer came at night in a boat, because we lived on the sea-shore, and I got up very softly, very softly, and we sailed together to a big ship, and then we crossed the great ocean, and here we are."

"Here you are!" said Thérèse, who held the child close to her heart, and, trembling with frantic joy, enveloped him in a single, fervent kiss while he was speaking; "where is Palmer?"

"I don't know," said the child. "He brought me to the door, and told me to ring; then I didn't see him again."

"Let us look for him," said Thérèse, rising; "he cannot be far away!"

She ran out with the child, and they found Palmer, who was waiting at a little distance, to make sure that the boy was recognized by his mother.

"Richard! Richard!" cried Thérèse, throwing herself at his feet in the middle of the still deserted street, as she would have done if it had been full of people. "To me you are *God!*"

She could say no more; suffocated by tears of joy, she well-nigh went mad.

Palmer led her beneath the trees on the Champs-Élysées, and made her sit down. It was at least an hour before she became calm and recovered her wits, and could manage to caress her son without danger of smothering him.

"Now," said Palmer, "I have paid my debt. You gave me days of happiness and hope, and I did not choose to remain under obligations to you. I give you a whole life-time of affection and consolation, for this child is an

angel, and it costs me dear to part from him. I have deprived him of one inheritance, and I owe him one in exchange. You have no right to object; my measures are taken, and all his interests are properly cared for. He has a purse in his pocket which assures his present and his future. Adieu, Thérèse! Be sure that I am your friend in life and in death."

Palmer went away happy; he had done a good deed. Thérèse did not choose to return to the house where Laurent was sleeping. She took a cab, after sending a messenger to Catherine with her instructions, which she wrote at a small café where she and her son breakfasted. They passed the day driving about Paris, equipping themselves for a long journey. In the evening, Catherine joined them with the boxes she had packed during the day, and Thérèse left Paris to conceal her child, her happiness, her repose, her toil, her joy, her life, in the depths of Germany. She was selfishly happy; she thought no more of what would become of Laurent without her. She was a mother, and the mother had killed the mistress beyond recall.

Laurent slept all day, and awoke in solitude. He rose, cursing Thérèse for going out to walk without thinking of ordering supper for him. He was surprised not to find Catherine; consigned the house to all the devils, and went away.

Not until some days later did he understand what had happened to him. When he saw that Thérèse's house was sublet, the furniture stored or sold, and when he waited weeks and months without receiving a word from her, he abandoned hope, and thought of nothing but wooing oblivion.

Not until a year had elapsed did he find a way to send a letter to Thérèse. He charged himself with all his

misfortunes, and implored a return of the former friendship; then reverted to the vein of passion, and concluded thus:

"I know that I do not deserve even this from you, for I cursed you, and in my despair at losing you I made the efforts of a desperate man to cure myself. Yes, I strove to make your character and your conduct unnatural in my own eyes; I said evil of you with people who hate you, and I took delight in hearing evil said of you by people who did not know you. I treated you absent as I treated you when you were here. And why are you not here? It is your fault if I go mad; you should not have abandoned me. Oh! wretch that I am, I feel that I hate you at the same time that I adore you. I feel that my whole life will be passed in loving you and cursing you. And I see that you detest me! And I would like to kill you! And if you were here I should fall at your feet! Thérèse, Thérèse, have you become a monster, that you no longer know pity? Oh! what a horrible punishment is this incurable love, combined with this unsatisfied anger! What have I done, O my God! to be reduced to lose everything, even liberty to love or hate?"

Thérèse replied:

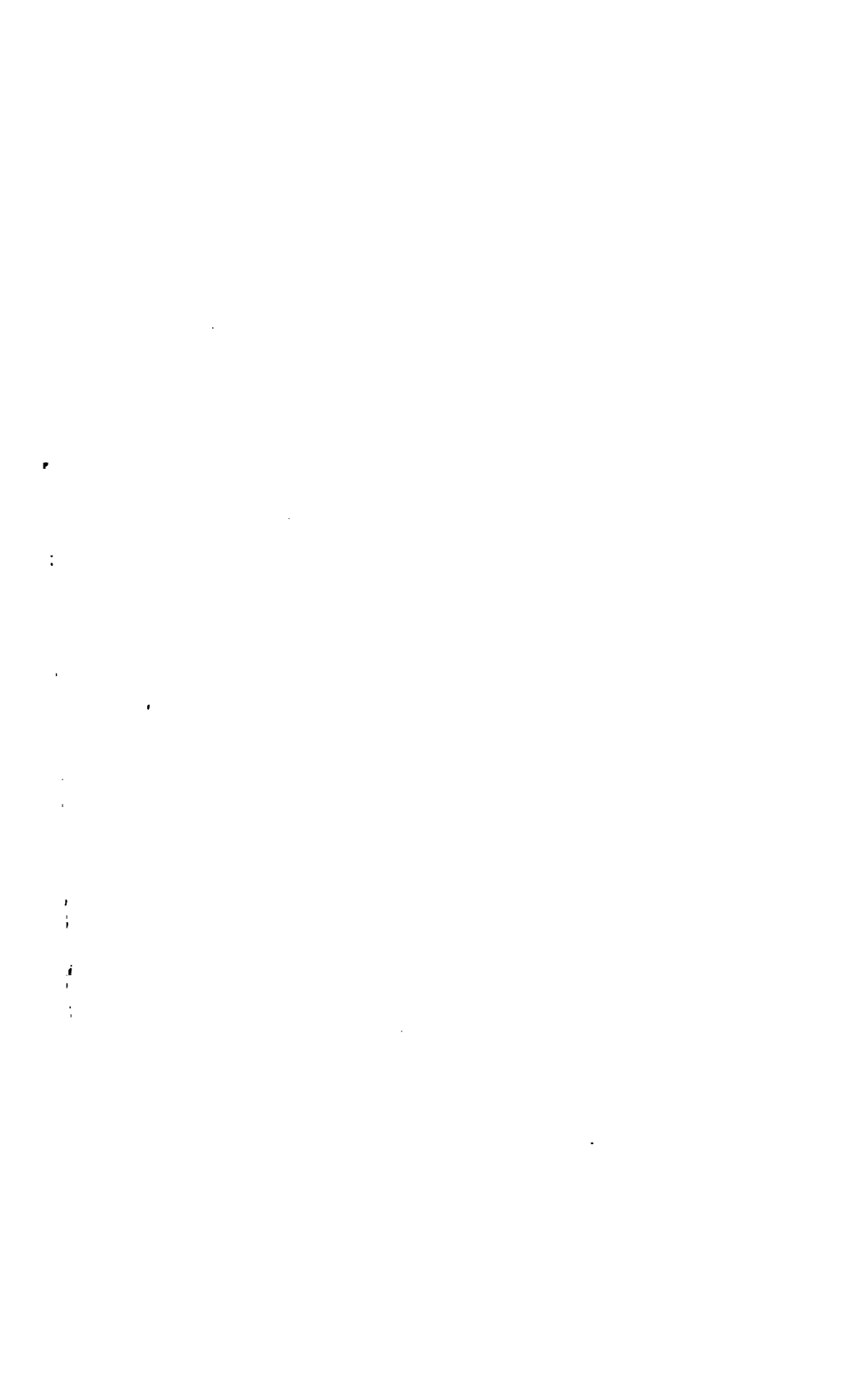
"Adieu forever! But be sure that you have done nothing to me which I have not forgiven, and that you can never do anything which I cannot forgive. God condemns certain men of genius to wander about in the tempest and to create while in pain. I have studied you enough in your lights and shadows, in your grandeur and your weakness, to know that you are the victim of destiny, and that you should not be weighed in the same

scales with most other men. Your suffering and your doubt, which you call your punishment, may be the conditions upon which your glory depends. Learn, therefore, to submit to them. You aspired with all your might to ideal happiness, and you grasped it only in your dreams. But your dreams, my child, are your reality, they are your talent, they are your life; are you not an artist?

“Have no fear, God will forgive you for not being able to love! He doomed you to that insatiable aspiration, so that your youth should not be engrossed by one woman. The women of the future, they who will gaze at your work from century to century,—they are your sisters and your sweethearts.”



LAVINIA



AN OLD TALE

NOTE

"Since you are to be married, Lionel, would it not be well for us to return our respective letters and pictures? It can easily be done, since chance has brought us within a short distance of each other, and, after ten years passed in different countries, we are but a few leagues apart to-day. You come sometimes to Saint-Sauveur, so I am told; I am passing only a week here. I trust, therefore, that you will be here during the week with the package which I desire. I am living in the Maison Estabanette, at the foot of the water-fall. You can send your messenger there; he will bring back to you a similar package, which I have all ready for delivery in exchange for the other."

REPLY

"MADAME:

"The package which you command me to send you is with me, sealed, and bearing your name. I ought, doubtless, to be gratified to find that you relied confidently on my having it at hand whenever and wherever it should please you to demand it.

"But is it necessary, madame, that I should go myself to Saint-Sauveur, there to place it in the hands of a third

person to be handed to you? Since you do not deem it advisable to accord me the pleasure of seeing you, will it not be simpler for me not to go to the place where you are living and expose myself to the emotion of being so near you? Would it not be better for me to entrust the package to a messenger of whom I am sure, to be taken from Bagnères to Saint-Sauveur? I await your orders in this regard; whatever they may be, madame, I will submit to them blindly."

NOTE

"I knew, Lionel, that my letters happened to be among your luggage at this moment, because my cousin Henry told me that he saw you at Bagnères, and learned that fact from you. I am very glad that Henry, who is a little inclined to prevaricate, like all gossips, did not deceive me. I asked you to bring the package to Saint-Sauveur yourself, because such documents should not be carelessly exposed to danger in mountains infested with smugglers who steal everything that falls into their hands. As I know that you are the sort of man to defend a trust valiantly, I cannot but feel perfectly safe in making you the guardian of the treasure in which I am interested. I did not suggest an interview, because I feared to make even more disagreeable the vexatious step which I have in a measure forced upon you. But since you seem to refer with regret to the possibility of an interview, I owe you that feeble compensation, and grant it with all my heart. But, as I do not wish to make you sacrifice valuable time in waiting for me, I will appoint a day, so that you may be sure to find me. Be at Saint-Sauveur, then, on the 15th, at nine in the evening. Go to my house, and send word to me by my negress. I will return at once. The package will be ready. Farewell."

Sir Lionel was disagreeably surprised by the receipt of the second note. It found him in the midst of preparing for a trip to Luchon, during which the fair Miss Ellis, his future bride, expected to be favored with his escort. It was certain to be a charming trip. At watering-places, pleasure-parties are almost always successful, because they succeed one another so rapidly that one has no time to prepare for them; because life moves swiftly, sharply, and in unexpected ways; because the constant arrival of new companions gives a flavor of improvisation to the most trivial details of a fête.

Sir Lionel was amusing himself, therefore, at the watering-places in the Pyrenees as much as it is seemly for a true Englishman to amuse himself. He was, moreover, in love to a reasonable degree with Miss Ellis's plump figure and comfortable dowry; and his desertion on the eve of so important a riding excursion—Mademoiselle Ellis had sent to Tarbes for a very handsome dapple-gray Bearnese steed, whose fine points she proposed to exhibit at the head of the cavalcade—might have a disastrous effect on his projected marriage. But Sir Lionel's position was embarrassing; he was a man of honor, and of the most scrupulous type. He went to his friend Sir Henry to lay before him this case of conscience.

But, in order to compel that jovial individual to give him his serious attention, he began by picking a quarrel with him.

"Rattle-pated gossip that you are!" he cried, as he entered the room; "it was well worth while to go to tell your cousin that her letters were travelling about with me! You never yet were able to keep a dangerous word inside your lips. You are like a brook that flows the faster the more water it receives; one of those vases, open at the ends, which embellish the statues of naiads

and river-gods; the water that rushes through them doesn't stop for a moment."

"Good, Lionel, good!" cried the young man; "I like to see you in a fit of temper; it makes you poetic. At such times, you are yourself a stream, a river of metaphors, a torrent of eloquence, a reservoir of allegories."

"Oh! it's all very well to laugh!" exclaimed Lionel angrily; "we are not going to Luchon."

"We are not going! Who says so?"

"You and I are not going; I say so."

"Speak for yourself, if you please; so far as I am concerned, I am your humble servant."

"But I am not going, therefore you are not going, either. You have made a blunder, Henry, and you must repair it. You have caused me a terrible disappointment; your conscience bids you to help me to bear it. You will dine with me at Saint-Sauveur."

"May the devil fly away with me if I do!" cried Henry; "I have been madly in love since last night with the little girl from Bordeaux, at whom I laughed so heartily yesterday morning. I intend to go to Luchon, for she is going; she is going to ride my Yorkshire, and she will make your tall chestnut Margaret Ellis burst with jealousy."

"Look you, Henry," said Lionel gravely, "you are a friend of mine?"

"Of course; you know that. It's of no use to go into hysterics over our friendship just at this time. I understand that this solemn beginning is intended to impress me."

"Listen to me, Henry, I tell you; you are my friend, you rejoice in the fortunate occurrences of my life, and you would not readily forgive yourself, I am sure, for having caused me an injury, a genuine misfortune?"

"No, on my honor! But what are you talking about?"

"Well, Henry! it may be that you have caused my marriage to fall through."

"Nonsense! what folly! just because I told my cousin that you had her letters, and she asks you to return them! What influence can Lady Lavinia still have over your life, after ten years of mutual oblivion? Are you conceited enough to believe that she has never been consoled for your infidelity? Nonsense, Lionel! that is carrying remorse too far! there's no great harm done! it can be remedied, believe me——"

As he spoke, Henry nonchalantly put his hand to his cravat and glanced at the mirror; two acts which, in the venerable language of pantomime, are easy to interpret.

This lesson in modesty, from the lips of a much more conceited man than he, irritated Sir Lionel.

"I shall indulge in no reflections on Lady Lavinia's conduct," he replied, trying to express all the bitterness he felt. "No feeling of wounded vanity will ever lead me to try to blacken a woman's reputation, even though I had never loved her."

"That is precisely my case," replied Sir Henry carelessly; "I never loved her, and I never was jealous of those whom she may have treated better than me; nor have I anything to say of the virtue of my gloriously beautiful cousin Lavinia; I have never tried seriously to move her."

"You have done her that favor, Henry? She should be exceedingly grateful to you!"

"Come, come, Lionel! what are we talking about, and what did you come to say to me? You seemed yesterday to have very little regard for the memories of your early loves; you were absolutely prostrate before the radiant Ellis. To-day where are you, please? You seem unwilling to listen to reason on the subject of the past, and

then you talk about going to Saint-Sauveur instead of to Luchon! Tell me, with whom are you in love? whom are you going to marry?"

"I am going to marry Miss Margaret, if it please God and you."

"Me?"

"Yes, you can save me. In the first place, read the last note your cousin has written me. Have you done it? Very good. Now, you see, I must decide between Luchon and Saint-Sauveur, between a woman to be won and a woman to be consoled."

"Stop there, impertinent!" cried Henry; "I have told you a hundred times that my cousin is as fresh as the flowers, lovely as the angels, lively as a bird, light-hearted, rosy, stylish, and coquettish; if that woman is in despair, I am content to groan all my life under the burden of a like sorrow."

"Don't expect to pique me, Henry; I am overjoyed to hear what you tell me. But in that case can you explain to me the strange caprice that leads Lady Lavinia to force a meeting upon me?"

"O you stupid fellow!" cried Henry; "don't you see that it's your own fault? Lavinia had not the slightest wish for this meeting; I am very sure of it; for when I spoke to her about you, when I asked her if her heart didn't beat fast sometimes, on the road from Bagnères to Saint-Sauveur, when a riding-party drew near, of which you might be one, she replied indifferently: 'Oh! perhaps my heart would beat faster if I should meet him!'—And the last words were deliciously emphasized by a yawn. Oh! don't bite your lip, Lionel; one of those pretty little feminine yawns, so cool and harmonious that they seem courteous and caressing, so long drawn out that they express the most absolute apathy and the most hearty

indifference. But you, instead of taking advantage of this excellent disposition on her part, cannot resist the temptation to construct phrases. True to the everlasting pathos of discarded lovers, although enchanted to be one, you affect the piteous elegiac tone; you seem to bewail the impossibility of seeing her instead of telling her frankly that you are grateful beyond words."

"A man cannot say such impertinent things. How could I have foreseen that she would take seriously a few meaningless words prompted by the proprieties of the situation?"

"Oh! I know Lavinia; it's a characteristic piece of mischief."

"It's the never-failing mischief of womankind! But no; Lavinia was the sweetest and least satirical of women; I am sure that she is no more desirous of this interview than I am. Come, my dear Henry, save us both from this torture; take the package and go to Saint-Sauveur; take it upon yourself to arrange everything; make her understand that I cannot——"

"Leave Miss Ellis on the eve of your marriage, eh? That's an excellent reason to give to a rival! Impossible! you made the blunder, my dear fellow, and you must drink the cup. When a man is foolish enough to keep a woman's picture and letters for ten years, when he is giddy enough to boast of it to a chatterbox like me, when he is mad enough to be witty and sentimental in cold blood in a letter of rupture, he must submit to all the consequences. You have no right to refuse Lady Lavinia anything so long as her letters are in your hands; and whatever method of communication she may impose on you, you must submit to it so long as you have not carried out that solemn obligation. Come, Lionel! order your pony saddled and let us be off; for I will go with

you. I have been a little to blame in all this, and you see that I cease to jest when it comes to repairing my mistakes. Let us go!"

Lionel had hoped that Henry would suggest some other way of helping him out of the scrape. He sat motionless, dismayed, chained to his place by a secret, involuntary impulse to resist the decrees of necessity. But he rose at last, sad, resigned, and with his arms folded across his chest. In the matter of love, Sir Lionel was an accomplished hero. If his heart had been false to more than one passion, his external conduct had never departed from the code of the *proprieties*; no woman had ever had reason to reproach him for any act at variance with that refined and generous condescension which is the most convincing sign of indifference that a well-bred man can give to an irritated woman. With the consciousness of having been scrupulously observant of these rules, the handsome Sir Lionel forgave himself for the sorrows attached to his triumphs.

"Here is a pretext!" cried Sir Henry, rising in his turn. "The coterie of our fair compatriots decides everything here. Miss Ellis and her sister Anna are the most influential powers in the council of Amazons. We must induce Margaret to postpone this excursion, which is fixed for to-morrow, for one more day. A day here is a good deal, I know; but we must obtain it, allege some serious reason for our inability to go, and start to-night for Saint-Sauveur. We shall arrive there in the afternoon; we will rest until evening; at nine o'clock, while you are together, I will have the horses saddled, and at ten o'clock—I fancy that you won't need more than an hour to exchange two packages of letters—we will mount and ride all night, reach here at sunrise, and find the fair Margaret caracoling on her noble steed, my pretty little Madame

Bernos curvetting on my Yorkshire; we will change boots and horses; and, covered with dust, dead with fatigue, consumed with love, pale and interesting, we will attend our Dulcineas over mountains and valleys. If so much zeal is not rewarded, all women must be hanged as an example. Come, are you ready?"

Lionel, overflowing with gratitude, threw himself into Henry's arms. An hour later the latter returned.

"Let us be off," he said, "everything is arranged; the Luchon excursion is postponed till the 16th; but it was hard work. Miss Ellis had some suspicions. She knows that my cousin is at Saint-Sauveur, and she has a terrible aversion for my cousin, because she knows what a fool you made of yourself for her. But I adroitly turned aside her suspicions; I said that you were horribly ill, and that I had just forced you to go to bed——"

"Great Heaven! a new freak to help to ruin my chances!"

"No, no, not at all! Dick will put a night-cap on your bolster, place it in your bed, and order three pints of herb-tea from the maid-servant. Then he will put the key of the room in his pocket, and take up his position in front of the door, with a long face and mournful eyes; and he has orders not to let any one in and to murder whoever attempts to force a passage, though it were Miss Margaret herself. Ah! here he is already making up your bed. Good! he has an excellent face; he wants to look sad and he looks idiotic. Let us go out by the gate leading into the ravine. Jack will bring our horses to the end of the valley, as if he were exercising them, and we will join him at Lonnio Bridge. Come, forward, and may the god of love protect us!"

They rode rapidly over the space that separates the two mountain chains, and did not slacken their speed until they

entered the dark and narrow gorge which extends from Pierrefitte to Luz. That gorge is unquestionably one of the most characteristic and forbidding spots in the Pyrenees. Everything has a formidable look there. The mountains draw together; the banks of the Gave contract, and the river flows with a dull roar under the arches of rock and wild vines; the black sides of the cliff are covered with climbing plants, whose brilliant green fades to bluish tints in the distance, and to grayish tones near the mountain-tops. Their reflections in the rushing streams are sometimes of a limpid green, sometimes of a dull, slaty-blue, such as we see in the waters of the ocean.

Great marble bridges of a single span stretch from mountain to mountain over deep chasms. Nothing can be more imposing than the construction and the situation of those bridges, cast into space as it were, and swimming in the white, moist atmosphere which seems to fall regretfully into the ravine. The road passes from one side of the gorge to the other seven times in the space of four leagues. When our travellers crossed the seventh bridge, they saw at the bottom of the gorge, which widened almost imperceptibly before them, the charming valley of Luz, bathed in the flames of the rising sun. The mountains on both sides of the road were so high that not a single beam reached them. The water-ouzel uttered his plaintive little cry among the grasses by the stream. The cold, foaming water raised with an effort the veil of mist that lay upon it. On the higher ground a few lines of light gilded the jutting rocks, and the hanging locks of the clematis. But in the background of that rugged landscape, behind those huge black masses, as frowning and sullen as Salvator's favorite subjects, the lovely valley, bathed in sparkling dew, floated in the light and formed a sheet of gold in a frame of black marble.

"How lovely it is!" cried Henry, "and how I pity you for being in love, Lionel! You are insensible to all these sublime things; you consider that the loveliest sunbeam is not worth one of Miss Margaret Ellis's smiles."

"Confess, Henry, that Margaret is the loveliest creature in the three kingdoms."

"Yes, theoretically she is a flawless beauty. But that is just the fault I have to find with her. I would like her to be less perfect, less majestic, less classic. I should love my cousin a thousand times better if God should give me my choice between them."

"Nonsense, Henry, you don't mean what you say," said Lionel, smiling; "family pride blinds you. By the unanimous agreement of all who have eyes in their heads, Lady Lavinia's beauty is more than problematical; and I, who knew her in all the freshness of her prime, can assure you that there never was any possible comparison between them."

"Agreed; but Lavinia is so graceful and charming! her eyes are so bright, her hair so lovely, her feet so small!"

Lionel amused himself for some time combating Henry's admiration for his cousin. But, while he enjoyed extolling the beauty that he loved, a secret sentiment of self-esteem made him also enjoy listening to the praise of her whom he had formerly loved. It was a momentary impulse of vanity, nothing more; for poor Lavinia had never really reigned in his heart, which easy triumphs had spoiled very early. It is a great misfortune for a man to be thrust into a prominent position too soon. The blind admiration of the women, the foolish jealousy of vulgar rivals, are quite enough to give a false direction to an untried judgment and to corrupt an inexperienced mind."

Lionel, from having known too much of the joy of being loved, had exhausted the powers of his heart; from having exercised his passions too early in life, he had made himself forever incapable of feeling a serious passion. Beneath a handsome, manly face, beneath a youthful and vigorous expression, he concealed a heart as cold and worn out as an old man's.

"Come, Lionel, tell me why you did not marry Lavinia Buenafè, who is to-day Lady Blake through your fault? for, although I am no rigid moralist, and although I am disposed to respect in our sex the God-given privilege of doing as we please, I am unable to approve your conduct, when I reflect upon it. After courting her for two years, after compromising her as much as it is possible to compromise a young lady,—which is not a very easy thing to do in blessed Albion,—after causing her to reject some most eligible offers, you dropped her to run after an Italian singer, who certainly did not deserve the honor of inspiring such perfidy. Tell me, was not Lavinia clever and pretty? was she not the daughter of a Portuguese banker, a Jew to be sure, but very rich? was she not a good match? didn't she love you to distraction?"

"Why, my dear fellow, that is just why I complain: she loved me too much for me ever to have made her my wife. In the opinion of every man of sense, a lawful wife should be a gentle and placid helpmeet, an Englishwoman to the very depths of her being, not very susceptible to love, incapable of jealousy, fond of sleep, and sufficiently addicted to the excessive use of black tea to keep her faculties in a conjugal state. With that Portuguese girl, ardent of heart, active, accustomed from childhood to constant change of abode, to unrestrained manners, liberal ideas, and all the dangerous opinions that a woman picks up while travelling all over the world, I should have been

the most miserable, if not the most ridiculous of husbands. For fifteen months I was blind to the inevitable misery that that love was brewing for me. I was so young then! I was only twenty-two; remember that, Henry, and do not condemn me. I opened my eyes at last, just when I was about to commit the signal folly of marrying a woman who was madly in love with me. I halted on the brink of the precipice, and I fled in order not to succumb to my weakness."

"Hypocrite!" said Henry, "Lavinia told me the story very differently: it seems that, long before the heartless resolution that sent you off to Italy with Rosmonda, you had already tired of the poor Jewess, and that you cruelly made her sensible of the *ennui* that overpowered you when you were with her. Oh! when Lavinia tells about that, she displays no self-conceit, I assure you; she avows her unhappiness and your cruelty with an artless modesty which I have never noticed in other women. She has a way of her own of saying: 'In a word, I bored him.'—I tell you, Lionel, if you had heard her say those words, with the accent of ingenuous melancholy that she puts into them, I'll wager that you would have felt the stings of remorse."

"Ah! have I never felt them!" cried Lionel. "That is what disgusts a man still more with a woman—all that he has to suffer on her account after he leaves her, the thousand and one annoyances caused by the haunting memory of her, the voice of bourgeois society crying for revenge and shrieking curses, the disturbed and frightened conscience, and the exceedingly gentle but exceedingly cruel reproaches which the poor abandoned creature heaps upon him through the hundred voices of rumor. I tell you, Henry, I know nothing more wearisome or more depressing than the trade of a lady-killer."

"To whom are you talking?" retorted Henry grandiloquently, with that ironical, conceited gesture which

became him so well. But his companion did not deign to smile, and continued to ride on slowly, letting his reins lie on his horse's neck, and resting his wearied eyes on the charming panorama which the valley unrolled at his feet.

Luz is a small town about a mile from Saint-Sauveur. Our dandies halted there; Lionel could not be persuaded to go on to the place where Lady Lavinia was living; he took up his quarters in an inn, and threw himself on the bed, awaiting the hour fixed for the meeting.

Although the climate is very much cooler in the valley of Luz than in that of Bigorre, it was a scorching, oppressive day. Sir Lionel, stretched upon a wretched tavern bed, felt some feverish symptoms, and fell into a troubled sleep amid the buzzing of the insects that circled about his head in the burning air. His companion, being more active and less disturbed in mind, crossed the valley, paid visits all over the neighborhood, watched the riding-parties on the Gavarni road, saluted the fair dames whom he spied at their windows or on the roads, cast burning glances at the young Frenchwomen, for whom he had a decided preference, and joined Lionel again about night-fall.

"Come, up, up!" he cried, pulling aside the woollen curtains; "it is the time fixed for the meeting."

"Already?" said Lionel, who was just beginning to sleep comfortably, thanks to the cool evening air; "what time is it, Henry?"

Henry replied, with emphasis:

"At the close of the day when the Hamlet is still,
And naught but the torrent is heard upon the hill——" *

"Oh! for God's sake, spare me your quotations, Henry! I can see for myself that it is growing dark, that silence is

* Written thus, in English, in the original.

stealing over the landscape, that the voice of the torrent is louder and clearer; but Lady Lavinia doesn't expect me until nine o'clock, so I can sleep a little longer."

"No, not another minute, Lionel. We must walk to Saint-Sauveur; for I had our horses taken there this morning, and the poor creatures are tired enough now, to say nothing of what they still have to do. Come, dress yourself. Good! At ten o'clock, I will be at Lady Lavinia's door on horseback, holding your palfrey and ready to hand you your rein, exactly as our big William used to do at the theatre, when he was reduced to playing the jockey, the great man! Come, Lionel, here's your portmanteau, a white cravat, and some wax for your moustache. Patience! Oh! such negligence! such apathy! Can you think of such a thing, my dear fellow, as appearing carelessly dressed before a woman you no longer love? that would be a terrible blunder! Pray understand that you must, on the contrary, appear to the very best advantage, in order to make her realize the value of what she has lost. Come, come, brush your hair back even more carefully than if you were preparing to open the ball with Miss Margaret. Good! Let me brush your coat a bit. What! can it be that you forgot to bring a phial of essence of tuberose with which to saturate your silk handkerchief? That would be inexcusable. No, God be praised! here it is. On my word, Lionel, you are deliciously fragrant, you are magnificent; off you go. Remember that your honor is involved in causing a few tears to flow when you appear to-night, for the last time, on Lady Lavinia's horizon."

When they passed through the hamlet of Saint-Sauveur, which consists of fifty houses at the most, they were surprised to see no people of fashion in the street or at the windows. But they understood that strange circumstance

when they passed the ground-floor windows of a house from which came the shrill notes of a violin, flageolet, and *tympanon*, an indigenous instrument half-way between the French tambourine and the Spanish guitar. The noise and the dust apprised our travellers that the ball had begun, and that the most fashionable members of the aristocracy of France, Spain, and England, assembled in a modest apartment, with whitewashed walls embellished with wreaths of boxwood and wild thyme, were dancing to the strains of the most infernal cacophony that ever rent mortal ears and marked time falsely.

Several groups of *bathers*, those whom a less well-filled purse or genuine ill-health deprived of the pleasure of taking an active part in the function, were crowded about the windows, casting an envious or satirical glance into the ball-room over each other's shoulders, and exchanging enthusiastic or ill-natured remarks, pending the time when the village clock should strike the hour when every convalescent must go to bed, under pain of losing the *benefit* of the mineral waters.

As our two friends passed these groups, there was a sort of oscillating movement toward the windows; and Henry, mingling with the lookers-on, overheard these words:

"That's the beautiful Jewess, Lavinia Blake, just standing up to dance. They say that she's the best dancer in Europe."

"Come, Lionel," cried the young baronet; "come, see how beautifully dressed and charming my cousin is!"

But Lionel pulled him by the arm and dragged him away from the window, angrily and impatiently, not deigning to glance in that direction.

"Come, come!" he said; "we didn't come here to watch people dance."

But he could not move on so quickly that he did not hear another remark made somewhere in his neighborhood:

"Ah! the handsome Comte de Morangy is her partner."

"Do me the favor to tell me who else is likely to be?" rejoined another voice.

"They say he has lost his head over her," observed a third by-stander. "He has already used up three horses for her, and I don't know how many jockeys."

Self-esteem is so strange a counsellor, that, thanks to it, we all find ourselves in flat contradiction with ourselves a hundred times a day. In reality, Sir Lionel was delighted to know that Lady Lavinia was placed, by a new attachment, in a situation which assured their mutual independence. And yet, the publicity of the triumph which might help that discarded woman to forget the past was a species of affront which Lionel found it difficult to swallow.

Henry, who knew the neighborhood, guided him to the end of the village, to the house in which his cousin lived. There he left him.

This house stood a little apart from the other dwellings; the mountain rose behind it, and the front windows overlooked the ravine. A few feet away, a stream fell noisily into a cleft of the rock; and the house, bathed, so to speak, in that cool, wild noise, seemed to be shaken by the falling water and on the point of plunging with it into the abyss. It was one of the most picturesque locations imaginable, and Lionel recognized in the choice the romantic and slightly eccentric nature of Lady Lavinia.

An old negress opened the door of a small salon on the ground-floor. No sooner did the light fall on her glistening, weather-beaten face, than Lionel uttered an exclamation of surprise. It was Pepa, Lavinia's old nurse, whom Lionel had seen for two years in attendance upon his

beloved. As he was not on his guard against any sort of emotion, the unexpected appearance of that old woman, arousing the memory of the past, upset all his ideas for a moment. He was very near leaping on her neck, calling her *nurse*, as in his youthful, merry days, and embracing her as an old friend and faithful servant; but Pepa stepped back, observing Lionel's eagerness with an air of stupefaction. She did not recognize him.

"Alas! am I so changed?" he thought.

"I am the person whom Lady Lavinia sent for," he said in a faltering voice. "Did she not tell you?"

"Yes, yes, my lord," replied the negress; "my lady is at the ball; she told me to bring her her fan as soon as a gentleman knocked at the door. Stay here; I will go to tell her."

The old woman looked about for the fan. It was on a marble table, at Sir Lionel's hand. He took it up and gave it to the negress, and his fingers retained the perfume after she had gone out.

That perfume worked upon him like a charm; his nerves received a shock which extended to his heart and made it quiver. It was Lavinia's favorite perfume: a species of aromatic herb which grows in India, and with which her clothes and her furniture used always to be impregnated. That odor of patchouly was in itself a whole world of memories, a whole life-time of love; it was an emanation from the first woman Lionel had ever loved. A film passed over his eyes, his pulses throbbed violently; it seemed to him as if a cloud were floating in front of him, and in that cloud, a girl of sixteen, dark skinned, slender, at once lively and gentle: Lavinia the Jewess, his first love. He saw her pass, swift as a doe, skimming over the heather, riding through the game-laden preserves of her park, urging her black hackney through the swamps;

merry, ardent, and capricious as Diana Vernon, or as the jovial fairies of the Emerald Isle.

He soon felt ashamed of his weakness, when he thought of the *ennui* that had blighted that love and all the rest. He cast a sadly philosophical glance upon the ten years of positive existence which separated him from those days of pastorals and poetry; then he evoked the future, parliamentary renown, and the splendor of a political career, in the guise of Miss Margaret Ellis, whom he next evoked herself in the guise of her dowry; and finally he began to inspect the room in which he stood, glancing about with the sceptical expression of a disillusioned lover, and of a man of thirty at odds with social life.

Visitors to the watering-places in the Pyrenees live in simple lodgings; but thanks to the avalanches and torrents which wreck many houses every winter, decorations and furniture have to be replaced or restored every spring. The cottage Lavinia had hired was built of rough marble, and sheathed with resinous woods inside. The wood was painted white, and was as bright and cool as stucco. A rush mat of several colors, woven in Spain, served as a carpet. Snow-white dimity curtains reflected the moving shadows of the firs which shook their black tops in the night-wind, beneath the watery glance of the moon. Small jars of varnished olive-wood were filled with the loveliest mountain flowers. Lavinia had plucked with her own hand, in the loveliest valleys and on the loftiest peaks, the nightshade with its ruddy breast; the monk's-hood with its pale-blue petals and poisonous calyx; the pink and white sweet-william, with its delicately notched petals; the pallid soap-wort; the transparent bell-flowers, wrinkled like muslin; the purple valerian and all the wild daughters of solitude, so fresh and fragrant that the chamois fears that he may blight them by brushing

against them as he runs, and the water of springs unknown to the hunter barely bends them with its careless, silent stream.

That white and perfume-laden apartment had, as if unwittingly, an air of assignation; but it seemed also the sanctuary of a pure and maidenly love. The candles shed a timid light; the flowers seemed modestly to shield their bosoms from the glare; no woman's garment, no symbol of coquetry, had been left lying on the furniture; only a bunch of withered pansies and a torn white glove lay side by side on the mantel. Lionel, obeying an uncontrollable impulse, picked up the glove and crumpled it in his hand. It was like the cold, convulsive grasp of a last farewell. He took up the odorless bouquet, gazed at it for a moment, made a bitter remark about the flowers of which it was composed, and threw it down. Had Lavinia placed it there with the purpose that it should be noticed by her former lover?

Lionel walked to the window and put aside the curtains, to divert, by looking upon the spectacle offered by nature, the emotion that was gradually stealing over him. It was a magical spectacle. The house, built on the solid rock, formed a sort of bastion to a gigantic wall of perpendicular cliffs of which the Gave bathed the base. At the right, the cataract plunged into the ravine with a loud roar; at the left, a clump of firs leaned far over the abyss; in the distance lay the valley, vaguely outlined in the white moonlight. A tall wild laurel, growing in a cleft of the rock, brushed the window-sill with its long, shiny leaves, and the breeze, rubbing them together, seemed to be whispering mysterious words.

Lavinia entered while Lionel was engrossed by this spectacle; the noise of the water-fall and the wind prevented him from hearing her. She stood behind him a few

moments, occupied, doubtless, in collecting her thoughts, and perhaps asking herself if this were really the man she had loved so dearly; for, at that moment of inevitable emotion, although the situation had been planned beforehand, Lavinia fancied that she was dreaming. She could remember a time when it would have seemed impossible to her that she could see Lionel again without falling dead with grief and wrath. And now she stood there, mild and calm, perhaps indifferent.

Lionel turned instinctively and saw her. He was not expecting her, and he uttered an exclamation; then, ashamed of such a breach of the proprieties, and bewildered by the emotion that he felt, he made a violent effort to bestow upon Lady Lavinia a faultless and irreproachable salutation.

But, despite his utmost endeavors, an unforeseen embarrassment, an unconquerable agitation, paralyzed his shrewd yet frivolous wit, that tractable, obliging wit, which stood ever ready to be thrown into circulation, according to the laws of affability, and to be passed, like coin, from hand to hand, for the use of the first comer. On this occasion his rebellious wit held its peace and gazed open-mouthed at Lady Lavinia.

You see, he did not expect to find her so beautiful. He had left her quite ill and sadly changed. In those days, tears had withered her cheeks, sorrow had reduced her flesh; her eyes were dull, her hands hot and dry, and she neglected her dress. She imprudently made herself ugly then, poor Lavinia! not thinking that sorrow embellishes a woman's heart only, and that most men are quite ready to deny the existence of mind in woman, as was done at a certain council of Italian prelates.

Now, Lavinia was in all the splendor of that second beauty which comes to women who have not received incurable wounds in the heart in their first youth. She

was still a pale, thin Portuguese, with a slightly bronzed skin and a somewhat sharp profile; but her expression and her manners had acquired all the grace, all the caressing charm, of a Frenchwoman's. Her dark skin was as soft as velvet, as the result of restored and unfailing health; her slender form had recovered the lithe and flexible activity of youth; her hair, which she had cut off in the old days as a sacrifice to love, now shone in all its splendor, in heavy masses over her smooth brow; her costume consisted of a gown of India muslin, and a bunch of white heather, picked in the ravine and thrust in her hair. There is no more graceful plant than the white heather; as you watched its delicate clusters waving over Lavinia's black hair, you would have said that they were clusters of living pearls. That head-dress and that simple gown were in the most exquisite taste, and the ingenious coquetry of the sex revealed itself therein by dint of concealing itself.

Never had Lionel seen Lavinia so fascinating. For an instant, he was on the point of falling at her feet and asking pardon; but the placid smile that he saw on her face restored to him the modicum of bitterness necessary to enable him to carry through the interview with every appearance of dignity.

In default of suitable words, he took from his breast a carefully sealed package, and said, in a firm voice, as he placed it on the table:

"You see, madame, that I have obeyed like a slave; may I believe that my liberty will be restored to me from to-day?"

"It seems to me," rejoined Lavinia, with a somewhat melancholy playfulness, "that your liberty has not been very tightly chained, Sir Lionel! As a matter of fact, have you remained all this time in my fetters? I confess that I had not flattered myself that such was the fact."

"Oh! madame, in heaven's name, let us not jest! Is not this a melancholy moment?"

"It is an old tradition," she replied, "a conventional *dénouement*, an inevitable climax in all love-stories. And if, when two people were writing to each other, they were thoroughly impressed with the fact that in the future they would have to wrest their letters from each other with suspicion—— But no one ever thinks of it. At twenty years, we write with a sense of the utmost security, because we have exchanged eternal oaths; we smile with pity when we think of the commonplace results of all the passions that we see dying out; we are proud to believe that we shall prove an exception to this great law of human fickleness! Noble error, blessed conceit, wherein are born the grandeur and the illusions of youth! isn't that so, Lionel?"

Lionel remained dumb with stupefaction. This sadly philosophical language, although natural enough in Lavinia's mouth, seemed to him a ghastly contradiction, for he had never seen her so: he had seen her, a weak child, abandon herself blindly to all the errors of life, yield herself trustfully to all the tempests of passion; and, when he had left her crushed with grief, he had heard her continue to protest eternal fidelity to the author of her despair.

But to hear her thus pronounce sentence of death on all the illusions of the past, was a painful and ghastly thing. That woman who survived herself, so to speak, and who was not afraid to deliver a funeral oration on her own life, was a profoundly depressing spectacle, which Lionel could not witness without a pang. He could think of nothing to say in reply. He knew better than any one all that might be said in such cases, but he had not the courage to help Lavinia to commit suicide.

As he twisted and turned the package of letters in his hand in his embarrassment, she continued:

"You know me well enough, or, better still, you remember enough about me, to be sure that I reclaim these pledges of a former attachment for none of those prudential reasons which occur to women when they cease to love. If you had any suspicion of such a thing, I need do no more to justify myself than remind you that these pledges have remained in your hands for ten years, and that I have not once thought of asking you for them. I should never have made up my mind to do it, had it not been that another woman's happiness was jeopardized by the existence of those papers."

Lionel gazed steadfastly at Lavinia, watching for the faintest indication of bitterness or chagrin produced by the thought of Margaret Ellis; but he could not detect the slightest change in her expression or her voice. Lavinia seemed to be invulnerable.

"Has this woman changed to diamond or to ice?" he asked himself.

"You are very generous," he said, in a tone which expressed both gratitude and sarcasm, "if that is your only motive."

"What other can I have, Sir Lionel? Will you kindly tell me?"

"I might presume, madame, if I were inclined to deny your generosity,—which God forbid!—that personal motives are behind your wish to recover possession of these letters and this portrait."

"It would be a little late for me to think of that," laughed Lavinia; "surely, if I should tell you that I had waited until this late day before having *personal motives*,—that was your expression,—you would feel terribly remorseful, would you not?"

"You embarrass me extremely, madame," said Lionel; and he said these words composedly, for he was on his own ground once more. He had expected reproaches, and was prepared for an attack; but he had not that advantage; the enemy instantly changed her ground.

"Come, come, my dear Lionel," she said, smiling, with a glance of genuine kindness which was entirely unfamiliar to him, who had known only the passionate side of her nature, "don't be afraid of my abusing the opportunity. Common sense has come to me with years, and I have long understood that you were not blameworthy with regard to me; I was blameworthy toward myself, toward society, and perhaps toward you; for, between two lovers as young as we were, the woman should be the man's guide. Instead of leading him astray among the paths of a false and impossible destiny, she should preserve him for the world by drawing him to her. I did not know how to do anything right; I raised innumerable obstacles in your life; I was the cause, involuntary, to be sure, but imprudent, of the prolonged shrieks of malediction that pursued you; I had the horrible agony of seeing your life threatened by avengers whom I disavowed, but who rose up against you, despite my disavowal; I was the torment of your youth and the curse of your manhood. Forgive me; I have fully expiated the wrong I did you."

Lionel proceeded from surprise to surprise. He had come there, as a defendant, to take his seat most unwillingly in the dock; and lo! he was treated as a judge, and was humbly entreated to be merciful! Lionel was born with a noble heart; the breath of worldly vanities had blighted it in its bloom. Lady Lavinia's generosity moved him the more deeply, because he was not prepared for it. Vanquished by the nobility of the character thus revealed to him, he bowed his head and bent his knee.

"I did not understand you, madame," he said to her, in an altered voice; "I did not appreciate your worth; I was unworthy of you, and I blush for it."

"Do not say so, Lionel," she rejoined, putting out her hand to raise him. "When you knew me, I was not what I am to-day. If the past could be lived again, if to-day I should receive the homage of a man occupying your position in society——"

"Hypocrite!" thought Lionel; "she is adored by the Comte de Morangy, the most fashionable of great noblemen!"

"If," she continued, modestly, "I had to decide upon the outward, public life of a man whom I loved, I should perhaps be able to add to his good-fortune, instead of destroying it."

"Is this an overture?" thought Lionel, completely bewildered.

And in his confusion he pressed Lavinia's hand fervently to his lips. At the same time, he glanced at that hand, which was remarkably white and pretty. In a woman's younger days, her hands are often red and swollen; later, they become white, grow longer, and assume more graceful proportions.

The more he looked at her and listened to her, the more surprised he was to discover newly acquired charms. Among other things, she spoke English now with extreme purity, she had retained of the foreign accent and the awkward locutions, for which Lionel had laughed at her mercilessly, only so much as was necessary to impart an elegant and charming originality to her pronunciation and her turn of phrase. It may be that the pride and timidity formerly prominent in her character were concentrated somewhere in the depths of her being; but there was no outward indication of them. Less downright,

less stinging, less poetic, perhaps, than she used to be, she was far more fascinating in Lionel's eyes; she was more in accord with his ideas, more in accord with society.

How shall I tell it? After an hour's conversation, Lionel had forgotten the ten years that separated him from Lavinia, or rather he had forgotten his whole life; he fancied that he was with a strange woman, whom he loved for the first time; for the past showed him Lavinia sullen, jealous, and exacting; moreover, it showed him Lionel guilty in his own eyes; and, as Lavinia understood how painful his memories might be, she had the delicacy to touch upon them only with the utmost precaution.

They told each other the story of their lives since their separation. Lavinia questioned him concerning his new love with the impartiality of a sister; she extolled Miss Ellis's beauty, and inquired with kindly interest about her disposition and the advantages that such a marriage was likely to afford her former friend. For her own part, she told, in a disjointed, but clever and entertaining way, of her travels, her friendships, her marriage to an old nobleman, her widowhood, and the use she had since made of her wealth and her liberty. There was no little irony in all that she said; while she rendered homage to the power of reason, a little secret bitterness against that imperious power showed itself now and then, betrayed itself in the guise of badinage. But pity and indulgence were predominant in that heart, ravaged so early in life, and imparted to it a touch of grandeur which raised it above all other hearts.

More than an hour had passed. Lionel did not count the moments; he abandoned himself to his new impressions with the sudden and ephemeral ardor which is the last remaining faculty of worn-out hearts. He tried, by all

possible hints, to enliven the interview by leading Lavinia to talk of the real condition of her heart; but his efforts were of no avail: the woman was quicker and more adroit than he. When he thought that he had touched a chord, he found that he had only a hair in his hand. When he hoped that he was about to grasp her moral being, and hold it fast in order to analyze it, the phantom slipped away like a breath, and fled, intangible as the air.

Suddenly they heard a violent knocking; the noise of the torrent, drowning everything, had prevented their hearing the first blows, and they were now repeated impatiently. Lady Lavinia started.

"It is Henry coming to remind me," said Sir Lionel; "but, if you will deign to grant me a few moments more, I will go to tell him to wait. May I hope to obtain that favor, madame?"

Lionel was preparing to persist obstinately in his entreaties, when Pepa entered hurriedly.

"Monsieur le Comte de Morangy insists upon coming in," she said to her mistress, in Portuguese. "He is at the door, he won't listen to a word——"

"Ah! great heaven!" cried Lavinia, ingenuously, in English; "he is so jealous! What am I to do with you, Lionel?"

Lionel stood as if struck by lightning.

"Show him in," said Lavinia, hastily, to the negress. "And do you"—to Sir Lionel—"go out on the balcony. It is a magnificent night; you can wait there five minutes, to do me a favor."

And she pushed him onto the balcony. Then she dropped the dimity curtain, and turned to the count, who entered the room at that moment.

"What is the meaning of the noise you are making?" she said, calmly. "It is a regular invasion."

"Oh! forgive me, madame!" cried Morangy; "on my knees I implore my pardon. When I saw you leave the ball suddenly with Pepa, I thought that you were ill. You have not been well these last few days, and I was so frightened! In God's name, forgive me, Lavinia! I am a fool, a madman—but I love you so dearly that I no longer know what I am doing."

While the count was speaking, Lionel, hardly recovered from his surprise, flew into a violent rage.

"Insolent creature!" he thought, "to dare to ask me to be present at a tête-à-tête with her lover! Ah! if this is premeditated revenge, if it is a wilful insult, let them beware of me! But what folly! if I should show my anger, it would simply make her triumph. No! I will look on at the love scene with the coolness of a true philosopher."

He leaned toward the window, and ventured to enlarge, with the end of his riding-crop, the chink between the curtains. He was thus able to see and hear.

The Comte de Morangy was one of the handsomest men in France, tall and fair, with a face that was more imposing than expressive, elaborately curled and frizzled, a dandy from head to foot. His voice was soft and velvety. He lisped a little when he talked; his eyes were large, but devoid of brilliancy; his mouth fine and sneering, his hand as white as a woman's, and his foot shod with indescribable elegance. In Sir Lionel's eyes, he was the most formidable rival a man could possibly have to contend against; he was a foeman worthy of his steel, from his whiskers to his great toe.

The count spoke French, and Lavinia answered in that tongue, in which she was as proficient as in English. Another new talent! She listened to the *red heel's* insipid speeches with singular patience. The count ventured upon two or three impassioned sentences, which seemed

to Lionel to depart somewhat from the rules of good taste and dramatic propriety. Lavinia did not lose her temper; there was not even a suspicion of mockery in her smile. She urged the count to return first to the ball, saying that it would not be proper for her to return with him. But he persisted in his purpose to escort her to the door, swearing that he would not go inside until she had been there a quarter of an hour. As he spoke, he seized Lady Blake's hands, which she abandoned to him with indolent and provoking heedlessness.

Sir Lionel lost his patience.

"I am a great fool," he said to himself, at last, "to look on patiently at this mystification, when I can go away."

He walked to the end of the balcony. But there was a high balustrade, and immediately below was a ledge of rocks which bore little resemblance to a path. Nevertheless, Lionel boldly ventured to climb over the balustrade, and to walk a few steps along the ledge; but he was soon brought to a halt, for the ledge terminated abruptly at the water-fall, and even a chamois would have hesitated to go a step farther. The moon disclosed to Lionel the depth of that abyss from which only a few inches of rock separated him. He was obliged to close his eyes to overcome the vertigo that assailed him, and to crawl slowly back to the balcony. When he had succeeded in climbing over the balustrade once more, and found that frail bulwark between him and the precipice, he deemed himself the most fortunate of men, even though his rival's triumph was the price he must pay for that shelter. He had no choice but to listen to the Comte de Morangy's sentimental tirades.

"Madame," he said, "you have played with me too long. It is impossible that you should not know how I

love you, and I think it very cruel of you to treat me as if I acted on one of those fancies which are born and die in a day. My love for you is a sentiment that will endure throughout my days; and if you do not accept my consecration of my life to you, you will see, madame, that a man of the world may lose all respect for the proprieties, and throw off the sway of cold reason. Oh! do not reduce me to despair, or else beware of its effects."

"So you wish me to speak frankly, do you?" replied Lavinia. "Very well; I will do so. Do you know my story, monsieur?"

"Yes, madame; I know all. I know that a miserable wretch, whom I look upon as the lowest of men, shamefully deceived you and abandoned you. The pity which that misfortune arouses in me adds to my fervor. Only great hearts are doomed to be victims of men and of public opinion."

"But, monsieur," rejoined Lavinia, "you must know that I have been able to profit by the stern lessons of my destiny; that I am on my guard to-day against my own heart and against another's. I know that it is not always in a man's power to keep his oaths, and that whatever he obtains he misuses. That being so, monsieur, do not hope to move me. If you are speaking seriously, here is my reply: I am invulnerable. This woman who has been so decried for her youthful errors, is surrounded henceforth by a stouter rampart than virtue—distrust."

"Ah! I see that you do not understand me, madame," cried the count, falling on his knees. "May I be accursed if I have ever had a thought of presuming upon your misfortunes, to hope for sacrifices which your pride condemns."

"Are you perfectly sure that you have never had such a thought?" said Lavinia, with her sad smile.

"Well, I will be frank," said Monsieur de Morangy, with an accent of truth in which the mannerisms of the great nobleman vanished entirely. "Perhaps I may have had, before I knew you, the thought which I spurn now with profound remorse. In your presence, feigning is impossible, Lavinia; you subdue the will, you reduce cunning to naught, you command veneration. Oh! since I have known what you are, I swear that my adoration has been worthy of you. Listen to me, madame, and let me await my sentence at your feet. I desire to devote my whole future to you by oaths that cannot be broken. It is an honorable name, I venture to believe, and a handsome fortune, of which, as you are aware, I am not vain, that I lay at your feet, as well as a heart that adores you, a heart that beats for you alone."

"So you really mean to offer me marriage?" said Lady Lavinia, without, however, exhibiting offensive surprise. "I thank you, monsieur, for this proof of esteem and attachment."

And she offered him her hand with much warmth.

"God of mercy! she accepts!" cried the count, covering that hand with kisses.

"No, monsieur," said Lavinia; "I ask you to give me time for reflection."

"Alas! but may I hope?"

"I do not know; rely, at all events, upon my gratitude. Adieu. Go back to the ball; I insist upon it. I will be there in an instant."

The count passionately kissed the hem of her cape, and left the room. As soon as he had closed the door, Lionel put aside the curtain, ready to receive permission from Lady Blake to return. But she was sitting on the sofa, with her back to the window. Lionel could see her face reflected in the mirror opposite them. Her eyes were

fixed on the floor, her attitude dejected and thoughtful. Buried in absorbing meditation, she had completely forgotten Lionel, and the exclamation of surprise that escaped her when he suddenly appeared in the room was an ingenuous avowal of that painful absorption.

He was pale with anger; but he restrained himself.

"You must agree," he said to her, "that I respected your new attachment, madame. It required the most profound disinterestedness to listen to insulting remarks about myself, purposely provoked, perhaps,—and to remain quietly in my hiding-place."

"Purposely?" repeated Lavinia, gazing sternly at him. "How dare you think so of me, monsieur? If you entertain such ideas, go!"

"No, no; I do not think so," said Lionel, walking toward her, and grasping her arm excitedly. "Pay no heed to what I say. I am very much disturbed.—You surely must have relied upon my strength of mind, to force me to witness such a scene."

"On your strength of mind, Lionel? I don't understand that phrase. You mean, do you not, that I counted upon your indifference?"

"Laugh at me as much as you choose; be pitiless, trample on me! you have the right to do it. But I am very unhappy!"

He was deeply moved. Lavinia believed, or pretended to believe, that he was acting a part.

"Let us have done with this," she said, rising. "You should have taken advantage of the reply you heard me make just now to the Comte de Morangy; and yet that man's love does not offend me.—Farewell, Lionel! Let us part forever, but not in bitterness of spirit. Here are your letters and your portrait. Come, release my hand; I must return to the ball."

"Well, if you are determined, I will also stay," he exclaimed. "It seems to me such a good joke, that I propose to see it through to the end. To the devil with love-affairs at Bagnères, and the plans we made on the road! My excellent friend Sir Lionel Bridgemont is giving a performance for my benefit; I will be an attentive and absorbed witness of his drama."

Lionel would have given all the world to be rid of this irresponsible, bantering spy upon his actions; but it was impossible.

"As you are determined to follow me," he said, "I warn you that I am going to the ball."

"To the ball? very good. Dancing is an excellent remedy for the spleen and lameness."

Lavinia was dancing with Monsieur de Morangy. Lionel had never seen her dance. When she had come to England, she knew nothing but the *bolero*, and she had never ventured to dance it under the austere skies of Great Britain. Since then, she had learned our contradances, and she displayed in them the voluptuous grace of the Spaniard combined with an indefinable touch of English prudery, which tempered its exuberance. People stood on the benches to watch her dance. The Comte de Morangy was triumphant. Lionel was lost in the crowd.

There is so much vanity in the heart of man! Lionel suffered bitterly to see her who was long swayed and imprisoned by her love for him, who was once his alone, and whom the world would not have dared to come to take from his arms, now free and proud, encompassed by homage, and finding in every glance revenge or reparation for the past. When she returned to her place, Lionel—the count's attention being distracted for a moment—glided adroitly to her side, and picked up her fan,

which she had just dropped. Lavinia did not expect to see him there. A feeble cry escaped her, and her face turned perceptibly pale.

"Ah! great heaven!" she exclaimed; "I thought that you were on the road to Bagnères."

"Have no fear, madame," he said, in an undertone; "I will not compromise you with the Comte de Morangy."

However, he could not restrain himself for long, but soon returned and asked her to dance.

She accepted his invitation.

"Must I not ask Monsieur le Comte de Morangy's permission also?" he asked.

The ball lasted until daybreak; Lady Lavinia was sure of making such functions last as long as she remained. Under cover of the confusion which always creeps into the most orderly festivity as the night advances, Lionel was able to speak with her frequently. That night completely turned his head. Intoxicated by the charms of Lady Blake, spurred on by the rivalry of the count, irritated by the homage of the crowd, which constantly thrust itself between him and her, he strove with all his power to rekindle that extinct passion, and self-esteem made its spur felt so sharply that he left the ball in a state of indescribable excitement.

He tried in vain to sleep. Henry, who had paid court to all the women, and danced all the contradances, snored lustily. As soon as he awoke, and while rubbing his eyes, he said:

"Well, Lionel, God save us, my dear fellow! this is a very entertaining episode, this reconciliation between you and my cousin; for you need not hope to deceive me, I know the secret now. When we entered the ballroom, Lavinia was sad, and dancing with an absent-minded air; as soon as she saw you, her eyes lighted up, her brow

cleared. She was radiant during the waltz, when you whirled her through the crowd like a feather. Lucky Lionel! a lovely fiancée and a fine dowry at Luchon, a lovely mistress and a grand triumph at Saint-Sauveur!"

"A truce to your nonsense!" said Lionel, angrily.

Henry was dressed first. He went out to see what was going on, and soon returned, making his accustomed uproar on the staircase.

"Alas! Henry," said his friend, "will you never lose that gasping voice and that frantic gesticulation? You always act as if you had just started a hare, and as if you took the people you were talking to for uncoupled hounds."

"To horse! to horse!" cried Henry. "Lady Lavinia Blake is in the saddle; she is about starting for Gèdres with ten other young madcaps and Heaven knows how many beaux, the Comte de Morangy at their head—which does not mean that she has not the Comte de Morangy in her head, be it understood!"

"Silence, *clown!*" cried Lionel. "To horse, as you say, and let us be off!"

The riding-party had the start of them. The road to Gèdres is a steep path, a sort of staircase cut in the rock, skirting the precipice, presenting innumerable obstacles to horses, innumerable real dangers to their riders. Lionel started off at a gallop. Henry thought that he was mad; but, considering that his honor was involved in not being left behind, he rode after him. Their arrival created a strange effect on the caravan. Lavinia shuddered at sight of those two reckless creatures riding along the edge of a frightful abyss. When she recognized Lionel and her cousin, she turned pale and nearly fell from her horse. The Comte de Morangy noticed it, and did not take his eyes from her face. He was jealous.

His jealousy acted as an additional spur to Lionel. Throughout the day, he fought obstinately for Lavinia's slightest glance. The difficulty of speaking to her, the excitement of the ride, the emotions aroused by the sublime spectacle of the region through which they rode, the clever and always good-humored resistance of Lady Blake, her skill in managing her horse, her courage, her grace, the words, always natural and always poetic, in which she described her sensations,—all combined to stir Sir Lionel to the depths of his being. It was a very fatiguing day for the poor woman, beset by two lovers between whom she tried to hold the scales even; so that she accorded a grateful welcome to her jovial cousin and his noisy nonsense, when he spurred his horse between her and her adorers.

At nightfall, the sky was covered with clouds. A severe storm seemed imminent. The riders quickened their pace, but they were still more than a league from Saint-Sauveur when the storm burst. It grew very dark; the horses were frightened, and the Comte de Morangy's ran away with him. The little cavalcade became scattered, and the utmost efforts of the guides, who accompanied them on foot, were required to prevent some serious accident from bringing to a melancholy close a day that had begun so merrily.

Lionel, lost in the appalling darkness, compelled to walk along the edge of the cliff, leading his horse, for fear of falling over the precipice with him, was tormented by the keenest disquietude. He had lost sight of Lavinia, despite all his efforts, and had been seeking her anxiously for fifteen minutes, when a flash of lightning revealed the figure of a woman seated on a rock just above the road. He stopped, listened, and recognized Lady Blake's voice; but a man was with her; it could be no one but Monsieur

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de Morangy. Lionel cursed him in his heart; and, bent upon disturbing his rival's happiness, if he could do no more, he walked toward the couple as best he could. What was his joy on recognizing Henry with his cousin! He, like the kind-hearted, devil-may-care comrade he was, gave up his place to him, and walked away to hold the horses.

Nothing is so solemn and magnificent as the tumult of a storm in the mountains. The loud voice of the thunder, rumbling over the chasms, is repeated and echoes loudly in their depths; the wind, lashing the tall fir-trees and forcing them against the perpendicular cliff as a garment clings to the human form, also plunges into the gorges and utters shrill, long-drawn laments like sobs. Lavinia, absorbed in contemplation of the imposing spectacle, listened to the numberless noises of the storm-riven mountain, waiting until another flash should cast its bluish glare over the landscape. She started when it showed her Sir Lionel seated by her side, in the place occupied by her cousin a moment before. Lionel thought that she was frightened by the storm, and he took her hand to reassure her. Another flash showed her to him, with one elbow resting on her knee, and her chin on her hand, gazing enthusiastically at the wonderful scene produced by the raging elements. "Great heaven!" she exclaimed; "how beautiful it is! how dazzling and soft at once that blue glare! Did you see the jagged edges of the rock that gleamed like sapphires, and that livid background against which the ice-clad peaks towered aloft like giant spectres in their shrouds? Did you notice, too, that, in the sudden passage from darkness to light and from light to darkness, everything seemed to move and waver, as if the mountains were tottering to their fall?"

"I see nothing but you, Lavinia," he said, vehemently;

"I hear no voice but yours, I breathe no air but your breath, I have no emotion except that of feeling that you are near me. Do you know that I love you madly? Yes, you know it; you must have seen it to-day, and perhaps you wanted it to be so. Very well! if that is so, enjoy your triumph. I am at your feet, I ask you to forgive me and to forget the past,—I ask it with my face in the dust; I ask you to give me the future, oh! I ask it with passionate fervor, and you must grant my request, Lavinia; for I want you with all my heart, and I have rights over you——"

"Rights?" she repeated, withdrawing her hand.

"Does not the wrong I did you give me a right, a ghastly right, Lavinia? And if you allowed me to assume it in order to ruin your life, can you take it from me to-day, when I seek to claim it anew and to repair my crimes?"

We know all that a man can say under such circumstances. Lionel was more eloquent than I should have been in his place. He became strangely excited; and, despairing of his ability to overcome Lady Blake's resistance in any other way, seeing, moreover, that by making a less complete submission than his rival he gave him a very valuable advantage, he rose to the same level of devotion: he offered Lavinia his name and his fortune.

"Can you dream of such a thing?" she said, with emotion. "You would abandon Miss Ellis, when she is betrothed to you, when your marriage is already appointed?"

"I will do it," he replied. "I will do what the world will call insulting and criminal. Perhaps I shall have to atone for it with my blood; but I am ready to do anything to obtain you; for the greatest crime of my life is my failure to appreciate you, and my first duty, to return

to you. Oh! speak, Lavinia! give me back the happiness I lost when I lost you. To-day, I shall know how to appreciate and retain it; for I, too, have changed: I am no longer the ambitious, restless man whom an unknown future tormented with its deceitful promises. I know life to-day, I know what the world and its false splendor are worth. I know that not one of my triumphs was worth a single glance from you; and the chimera of happiness I have pursued, has always avoided me until this day, when it leads me back to you. Oh! Lavinia, do you, too, come back to me! Who will love you as I will? who will see, as I see, the grandeur, patience, and pity that your heart contains?"

Lavinia did not speak, but her heart beat with a violence which Lionel detected. Her hand trembled in his, and she did not try to withdraw it, nor a lock of hair which the wind had loosened and which Lionel covered with kisses. They did not feel the rain, which was falling in large but infrequent drops. The wind had diminished, the sky became somewhat lighter, and the Comte de Morangy came toward them as quickly as his lame and shoeless horse, which had nearly killed him by falling over a rock, could bring him.

Lavinia perceived him at last, and abruptly tore herself away from Lionel's caresses. Lionel, furious at the interruption, but full of love and hope, assisted her to remount, and escorted her to her door. There she said to him, lowering her voice:

"Lionel, you have made me an offer of which I realize the full value. I cannot reply without mature reflection."

"O God! that is the same reply you gave Monsieur de Morangy!"

"No, no; it is not the same thing," she replied, in an altered voice. "But your presence here may give rise

to many absurd reports. If you really love me, Lionel, you will swear to obey me."

"I swear it by God and by you."

"Very well! go away at once, and return to Bagnères; on my part, I promise you that you shall have my reply within forty hours."

"But what will become of me, great God! during that century of suspense?"

"You will hope," said Lavinia, hurriedly closing the door, as if she were afraid of saying too much.

Lionel did hope. His reasons for hoping were a word from Lavinia and all the arguments of his own self-esteem.

"You are wrong to abandon the game," said Henry, as they rode away; "Lavinia was beginning to melt. On my word, Lionel, that doesn't seem like you. Even if for no other reason than not to leave Morangy master of the field—— But I see that you are more in love with Miss Ellis than I thought."

Lionel was too preoccupied to listen to him. He passed the interval fixed by Lavinia, locked in his room, representing that he was ill; and did not deign to confide in Sir Henry, who lost himself in conjectures concerning his conduct. At last the letter arrived; it was in these terms:

"Neither the one nor the other! When you receive this letter, when Monsieur de Morangy, whom I have sent to Tarbes, receives his reply, I shall be far from you both; I shall have gone, gone forever, gone irrevocably, so far as you and he are concerned.

"You offer me name and rank and fortune; you believe that a brilliant position in society has a great fascination for a woman. Oh, no! not for her who knows society and despises it as I do. Do not think, however, Lionel,

that I disdain the offer you made to sacrifice a brilliant marriage, and bind yourself to me forever.

"You realized what a cruel blow it is to a woman's self-esteem to be abandoned, what a glorious triumph it is to bring back a once faithless swain to her feet, and you thought to compensate me by that triumph for all I have suffered; so I give you my esteem once more, and I would forgive you the past had I not done so long ago.

"But understand, Lionel, that it is not in your power to repair the wrong. No, it is in no man's power. The blow I received was a deadly blow; it killed the power to love in me forever; it extinguished the torch of illusions, and life appears to me in a dull and miserable light.

"But I do not complain of my destiny; it was bound to come, sooner or later. We all live to grow old, and to see all our joys overshadowed by disappointments. My disillusionment came when I was rather young, to be sure, and the craving for love survived for a long while the faculty of having faith in man. I have struggled long and often against my youth, as against a desperate foe; I have always succeeded in beating it.

"And do you imagine that this last struggle against you, this resistance to the promises you have made, is not exceedingly hard and painful? I may confess it, now that flight has placed me beyond all danger of surrender: I love you still, I feel it; the imprint of the first object of one's love is never entirely effaced; it seems to have vanished; we fall asleep, oblivious of the pain we have suffered; but let the image of the past arise, let the old idol reappear, and we are ready to bend the knee as before. Oh! fly, fly, phantom and falsehood! you are but a shadow, and if I should venture to follow you, you would lead me again among the reefs, and leave me there shattered and dying. Fly! I no longer believe in you.

I know that you cannot arrange the future as you will, and that, though your lips may be sincere to-day, the frailty of your heart will force you to lie to-morrow.

"And why should I blame you for being like that? are we not all weak and fickle? Was I not myself calm and cold when I approached you yesterday? Was I not perfectly certain that I could not love you? Had I not encouraged the Comte de Morangy's suit? And yet, in the evening, when you sat beside me on that rock, when you spoke to me in such an impassioned tone, amid the wind and the storm, did I not feel my heart soften and melt? Ah! now that I reflect, I know that it was your voice of the old days, your passion of the old days, you, my first love, my youth, that came back to me all at once, for a moment!

"And now, when my blood is cool, I feel a deathly depression; for I am awake, and I remember that I dreamed a lovely dream in the midst of a melancholy life.

"Farewell, Lionel! Assuming that your desire to marry me should last until the moment of its fulfilment (and even now, perhaps, you are beginning to feel that I may be right in refusing you), you would have been unhappy in the constraint imposed by such a bond; you would have found that the world—always ungrateful and sparing of praise for our good deeds—would look upon yours as the performance of a duty, and would deny you the triumph which perhaps you would expect. Then you would have thrown away self-content, and have failed to obtain the admiration upon which you counted. Who knows! perhaps I myself should have forgotten too quickly all that was noble in your return to me, and have accepted your new love as a reparation due to your honor. Oh! let us not mar the hour of honest impulse and mutual confidence we enjoyed last night; let us remember it always, but never seek to repeat it.

"Have no fear for your self-esteem so far as the Comte de Morangy is concerned; I have never loved him. He is one of the innumerable weak creatures who have failed—even with my assistance, alas!—to make my dead heart beat again. I would not even want him for a husband. A man of his rank always sells too dear the protection he bestows, by always making it felt. And then, I detest marriage, I detest all men, I detest everlasting pledges, promises, plans, the arranging of the future, in advance, by contracts and bargains at which Destiny always snaps its fingers. I no longer care for anything but travel, reverie, solitude, the uproar of the world, to walk through it and laugh at it, and poetry to endure the past, and God to give me hope for the future."

Sir Lionel Bridgemont's self-esteem was deeply mortified at first; for, to console those readers who may have become too warmly interested in him, we must say that in forty hours he had reflected seriously. In the first place, he thought of taking horse, following Lady Blake, overcoming her resistance, and triumphing over her cold common sense. Then he thought that she might persist in her refusal, and that, meanwhile, Miss Ellis might take offence at his conduct, and break off the match.—He remained.

"Well," said Henry to him, the next day, when he saw him kiss Miss Margaret's hand, who bestowed that mark of forgiveness on him, after a sharp quarrel concerning his absence; "next year, we will enter Parliament."



